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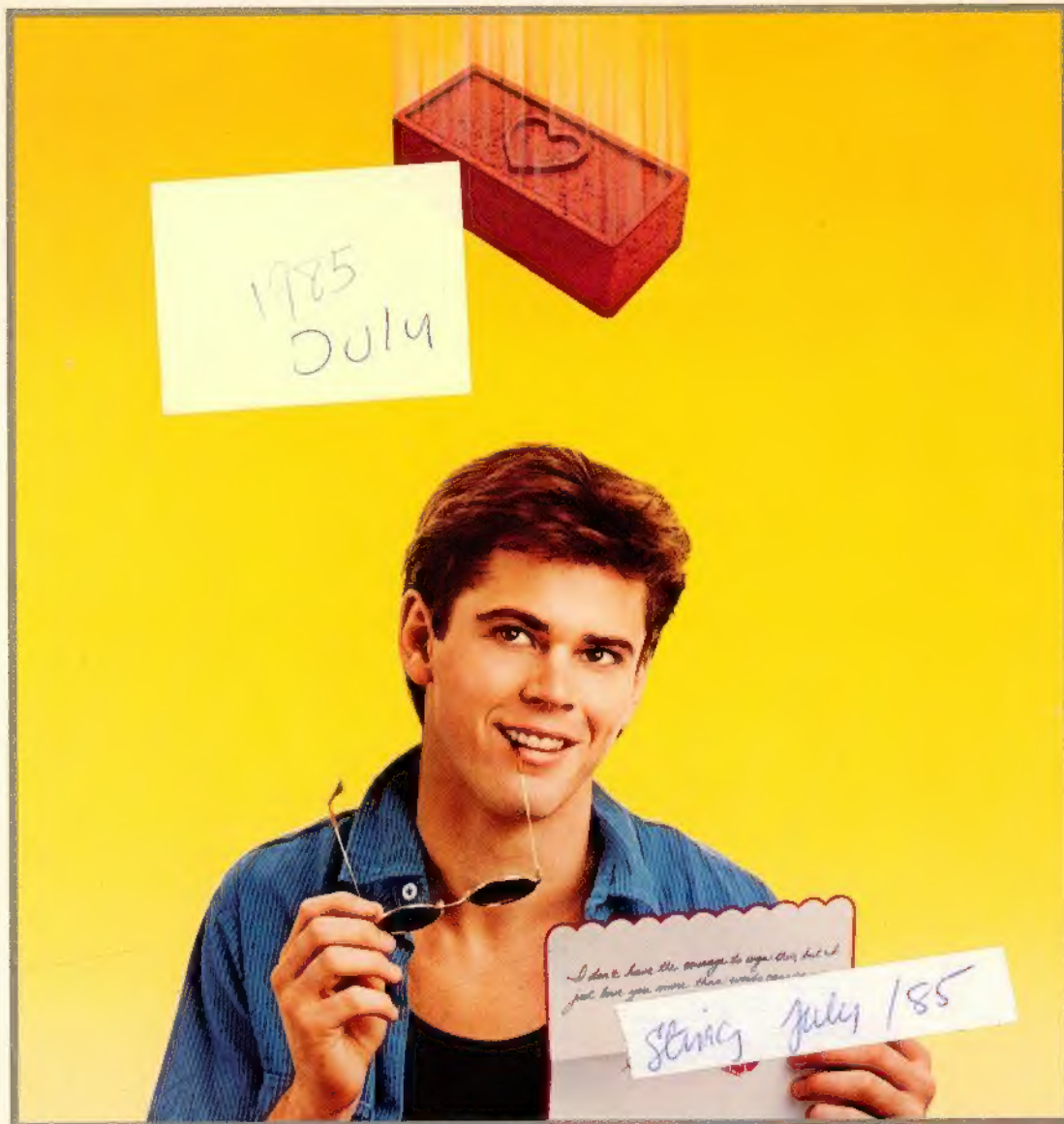
STING

By Timothy White

THE EDGE
GENERAL PUBLIC
ALI
LONE JUSTICE
NICK CAVE
BEASTIE BOYS
TOURE KUNDA
ATHENS, GEORGIA
UNDERGROUND
NIK KERSHAW
MURPH THE SURF
HENRY ROLLINS
(AGAIN)



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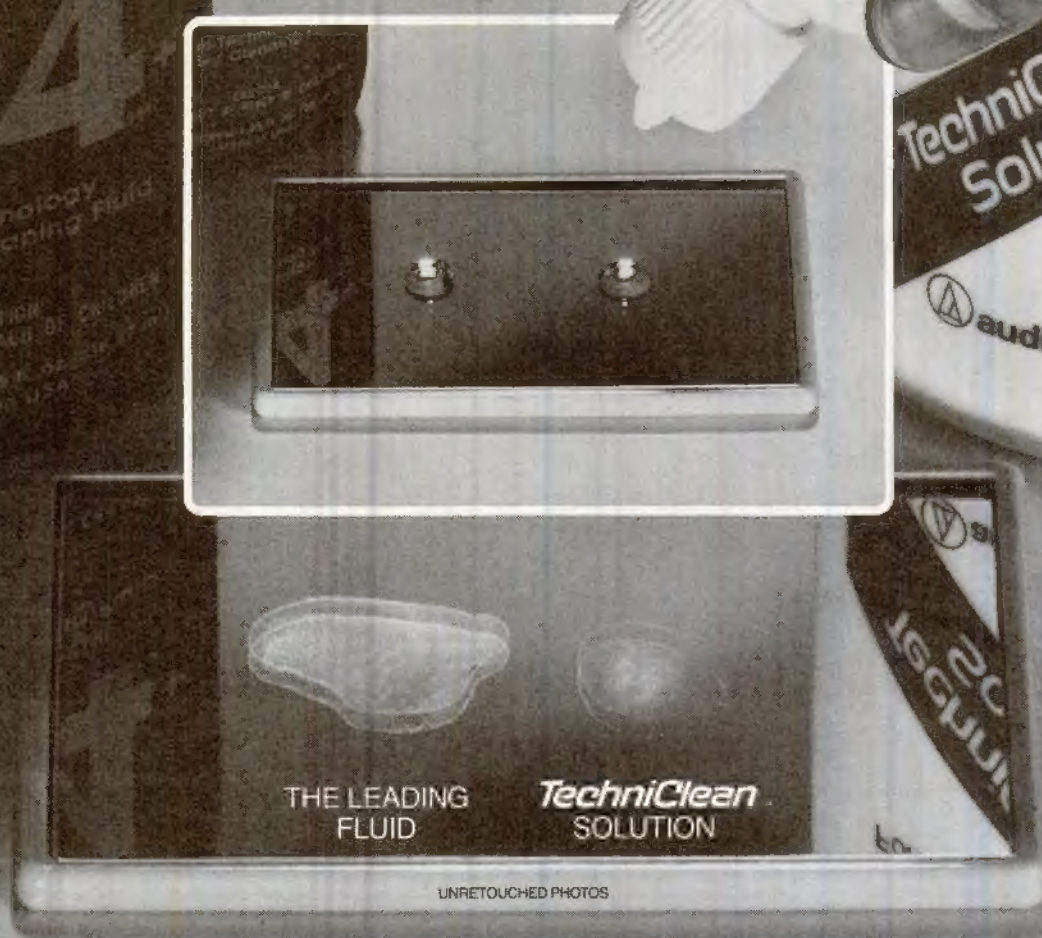
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Volume One Number Three
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TOP SPIN

Who's Who, What's What, and Why

Having been raised a strict Catholic, I was naturally surprised when the angel Gabriel appeared in my bedroom one morning. "Yo, man, wake up! We read SPIN in Heaven," he said with what I thought was a trace of impatience, but I couldn't be sure, being so dead to the world.

I haven't had the opportunity to talk to many of SPIN's readers yet, so I quickly became conscious in order to talk to this one. He asked me: "Why no letters page?" I explained that before the magazine debuted, obviously no one could have commented on it and by the time we printed the second issue—and even this, our third—we still hadn't received a wide-ranging correspondence. We got a lot of letters from people saying they really liked the magazine, but it was self-serving to print those, although we were very grateful. We have received a few letters from people who absolutely hated the magazine and I told him that next month we were going to print those, officially opening our letters section.

If an angel ever visits you, you will notice they are exceedingly irascible and like to talk. Neither do they seem to be in a hurry to go anywhere. We sat around and chatted about this issue.

We have been working on our Sting story (p. 40) since February. Are the Police now Sting's old band and not his other one? There have been conflicting rumors bouncing around the music industry. But, super groups, especially those worth millions of dollars to record companies, are like love affairs, they take a long time between breaking up and admitting it.

Tim White spent most of the past nine months with Sting both in the Caribbean and in New York, (thankfully, not on our expense account). White is an extremely sensitive author and has written an intimate, insightful profile. James Hamilton did all the principal photography, including the cover. Hamilton is one of the best photographers in the world. Fact.

An interesting story (names have been omitted to protect the innocent—i.e., us—from libel suit): a certain magazine made a deal with a certain company to guarantee they would have the first music-magazine Sting cover story. (Apparently it's more important to get the first story, less relevant whether it's the best.) The corporation approaches SPIN and asks—we wouldn't want to use the word "threaten"—that we comply with the said agreement and hold publication of our story until said magazine can proudly display its. Our answer, dear reader, you would not repeat in front of an angel, no matter how well you were connected.

For a quarter of a century Muhammad Ali has held our attention. He once declared his was the most recognizable face in the world: both true and understandable. When he was fighting, he was more than a boxer, although that would have been enough to earn him immortality. He was an emotional Atlas, carrying on his back a colorful globe of a generation's electrified passions. Harold Conrad, who has known him for those twenty-five years, visited the Champ and provides an extraordinary personal retrospective (page 66).

Incidentally, Conrad, who started as a sportswriter for the *Brooklyn Eagle* in the thirties, is a fascinating character. Bogart once played him in a movie, *The Harder They Fall*.

A lot of fuss is being made lately about Athens, Georgia. This is surprising to the people who live there, one of whom, Mike Mills, plays bass for R.E.M. and puts the slightly exaggerated "scene" in perspective (page 20).

One of the most exciting of all new musical movements is the fresh, innovative sound coming from Africa; ironically a music rooted in the delta of primitive tribal rhythms. Toure Kunda are, in my humble and somewhat autocratic opinion, the best group currently producing this extraordinary sound. You can read about them on page 52. I didn't write the piece, so it's objective.

The Beastie Boys are gathering fame and hopefully fortune while opening for Madonna on her national tour. The Beastie Boys are great. Everything else you need to know about them is on page 60, thanks to Scott Cohen, whom we don't have a photograph of this month. Hey, what do you want us to do, become predictable?

Many of you have expressed interest in seeing a picture of John Schaefer, who edits New Sounds. However, not enough of you.

Television oftens takes a critical pounding. In *Moving Images* (page 57) Ben Stein appraises TV much the same way Marvin Hagler appraised Thomas Hearns' face. Last is not least: Henry Rollins writes another essay (page 74).

Gabriel? Before he departed, he looked me straight in the eye and said, in a tone serious: "Ever wonder how you can be three weeks beyond your dead-deadline and still get your magazine out on time?" I nodded mutely. My celestial guest leaned forward. "Great color-separators. Besides, I like Terry Smith."

It may not have been one of heaven's greatest mysteries, but it is certainly true.

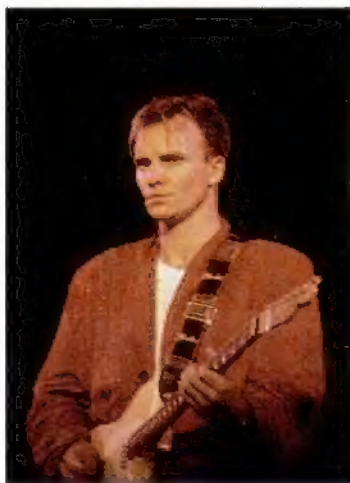
—Bob Guccione, Jr.



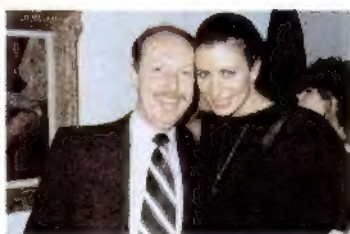
Mike Mills



Ring Magazine



Leslie Franklin



George DuBois



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Top: Sue Cummings: once our future star, impatient, became a star; below: Muhammad Ali, seen here impressing Sonny Liston, long ago; below that: Sting solo, and Biff. Below even that: Terry Smith (left), who apparently has friends in high places.

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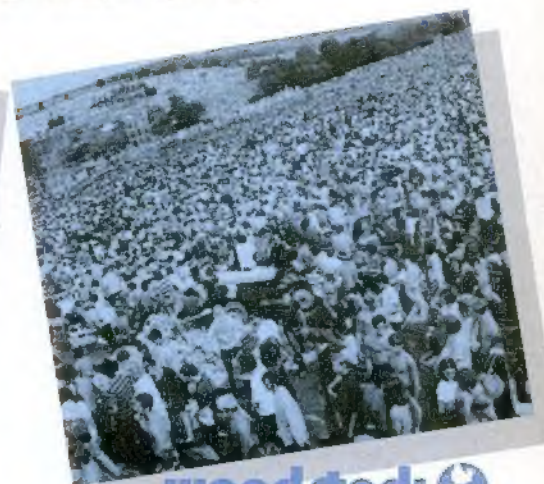
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David Bowie; Men At Work; The Pogues; Nik Kershaw; Katrina and the Waves; and a peek behind the Iron Curtain.

FLASH

Edited by Jessica Berens



Courtesy Stiff Records

The Pogues were called Pogue Mahone, until British broadcasting authorities discovered the name meant "kiss my arse" in Irish and forced them to abbreviate it.



Angela Collar

The Pogues

"But we're still Pogue Mahone in spirit," declare the rowdy six-piece, who boast the dubious honor of being history's ugliest rock band since The Grateful Dead.

"I'd rather spend a few hours in a pub than on a sun bed," rasps unkempt singer Shane MacGowan, whose gray complexion and black teeth provide convincing evidence. "Pubs are our inspiration."

The Pogues are doing for Irish folk music what Malcolm McLaren did for square dancing with "Buffalo Gals," only without the self-conscious presentation of "novelty." Their performances on accordion, banjo, acoustic guitar, whistle and beer tray inject new vigor into the traditional tunes and attract considerable attention.

MacGowan's family is from North London's Irish community, where Gaelic traditions are conscientiously kept alive. The cliché English joke that the Irish are all dim-witted alcoholics is obviously invalid, but the neighborhood does boast innumerable pubs with names like "Buddy Mulligan" that shelter the unemployed, the lonely and the thirsty.

"My mother used to sing in *flaoiseals* [country music festivals] in Ireland, so it's in my blood," explains MacGowan. "My other influence was Dubliners records." The Dubliners were a band, few will recall, as

famous for its drinking, cursing and unruliness as for its music.

MacGowan and Jem Finer, the banjo player, began their career busking outside London's subway stations. The reaction was so enthusiastic that MacGowan abandoned his punk band, The Nipple Erectors, and concentrated on playing Irish dance music in local pubs.

"I'm sure we were pretty terrible at first, and I'm still a bit surprised at our success; we're not that good even now," he points out. But the critics rave. "The Pogues combine the emotion and sentiment of the best Irish pub songs and backwards country music with the violent drive of early punk and roariest rockabilly," enthused one writer.

Stiff Records boss Dave Robinson offered them a contract; Elvis Costello is producing their second album (the follow-up to their debut *Red Roses for Me*); and *Repo Man*'s Alex Cox directed the video for their single "Pair of Brown Eyes."

The Pogues have blessed Irish music fans with live performances of songs like "Waxie's Dargle" and "Boys From the County Hell," but dropped the rebel songs from the set when, during one performance, they were greeted by a hailstorm of soggy French fries. So now, unlike their fellow countrymen U2, they are leery of making

political comments about the blood-soaked civil war in Ireland.

"It's a waste of time for pop musicians to get involved in politics and arrogant of them to tell people what to think," MacGowan says. "My songs are about being Irish in London, about people I meet, the pubs and getting drunk. London is a shithole and the country is going to the dogs, but I love the seamy side of life."

"I want to get rich and rise above the squalor, but I suppose I will just go from one shithole to another. I don't want to wind up like Rod Stewart, although I wouldn't mind his money. It is better to lose your humanity when you're rich rather than when you're poor."

The Pogues launch themselves on the innocent public here this summer, when they play a series of concerts.

—Hugh St. Clair

Yakety Yak

I hope you realize, George, that that haircut cost you £10,000.

—Simon Napier Bell, to Wham's George Michael, after a day's video shooting had to be scrapped because Michael objected to his hairdo.

East Germany's red government rules that all pop music must be positive, but censors can't stop satire and innuendo.

East Berlin's tentative steps toward establishing its own youth culture have been witnessed only by the very few outsiders permitted to cross the wall that physically and politically splits Germany in half. Nevertheless, an unexpectedly vibrant rock scene thrives in the communist sector. Its development has been hindered by slow post-war reconstruction and the stringent prohibition of Western influences, but in the relatively prosperous and stable present, it enjoys a higher profile than ever before. So much so that large festivals—like the two-day *Rock for Peace '85*—have become regular dates on the socialist calendar.

The festival's venue—the grand, impressively modern

Palace of the Republic—might not appear to be conducive to a good time, but it doesn't intimidate the locals. They let their hair down in every possible way. Dyed Mohawk crops are visible among the freshly shorn conscripts' heads, the longhairs in their dungarees and some fantastically sculpted post-punk quiffs and piles.

As a rule, elements of the audience seem to be far ahead of the groups offered to them by the state, not only in terms of style, but also in their cultural needs. This new generation of East Germans seems less willing to settle for slogans and platitudes. They crave more sophisticated stimulation.

Aware of this dissatisfaction, authorities are responding to

new demands. A broader range of books, once restricted by the dourer tenets of socialist realism, are presently displayed in bookshops; a teen poster-zine sits alongside heavier Party periodicals, and less starchy pop broadcasts lighten the airwaves. Now it's just a matter of the music groups following suit.

It is not so easy for them, entangled as they are in the bureaucratic web of auditions, acceptance and ranking. A group's status and earning power depend largely on their proven musical ability. By the time they've been through the High School for Entertainment Art, many have had the essential intuition and spontaneity drummed out of them.

So, despite the variety of styles and genres at the festival, many groups lack that indefinable essence that makes great rock. Efficiency mitigates against vital sparks. Well-ordered music counters the swing and swagger crucial to rock's physical impact. Some explain away this last point as a result of East Germany's distance from rock's roots in black American music. This may be true, but it denies the boisterous beer-and-onions folk culture familiar to us via the works of Brecht, Günter Grass and Stefan Heym.

What is indigenous to many of the festivals' groups is a predilection for misty-eyed melancholy, manifesting itself in synth-swathed, heads-down-into-the-eye-of-the-storm rock; a comfortable plunge into *Deutsche Tiefe* (German Depths).

The related tendency is *weltschmerz*. The pressure to string together a few well-meaning slogans expressing horror at the evils of the world must be immense, for nearly all the groups have done this. Even the inappropriately named Silly, an avant-pop outfit making tentative experiments with the shape of their music, are best known for a humanistic Marley-styled anthem, "A Song for the People." Like Marley's lazier songs, their's is too platitudinous and ill-defined to carry real force. (As it happens, Silly couldn't make the festival this year, due to the male members of the group completing their national military service. Their lyrics, however, figure in the festival's

broadsheet.)

Diluted *weltschmerz* and tepid *tiefe* dips are more a curse of the older groups than the quicker-witted, amateur and semi-pro bands. Perhaps it is a sign of age: The touted main attractions, Karat, Stern Meissen and City, are each celebrating anniversaries of 10 years and more. Of the three ensembles, only City seems aware that self-renewal means more than upgrading equipment. Their cropped and shaven heads lend their performance a slightly sinister aura, which runs counter to the official brief that music must be positive.

Said brief does not deny groups the right of social criticism; they just have to be a bit more subtle about it. Which is where the semi-pro, amateur and Kabarett outfits come into their own. Closer to street-corner gossips than the elevated supergroups, they voice popular sentiment and resentment; their accuracy of aim makes it difficult for the censors.

Satire, often accepted as a safety valve in restricted societies, has a strong tradition in Berlin. Oddly, the best satirists here come from nearby Magdeburg, a town reconstructed above the rubble of the one destroyed in World War II. They are Reggae Play and Juckreiz. The former is a keyboard pop duo fronted by a camp clown who tells saucy tales about post-pill teen sex lacking that vital element of danger. The latter is fronted by a girl singer, whose finely developed sense of pop irony dwarfs the mediocrity of Nena, with whom they have a passing similarity.

But the highlight of the festival is the Berlin group Pankow. Named for a well-appointed East Berlin suburb that was once a fashionable address for high-ranking party officials, Pankow's volatile boomtown boogie is enhanced by the probability that it might fall apart at any moment. Noting the demands of the state censors, they dissolve the clever, advanced narratives of their songs in deceptively simple chorus statements, whose meanings depend on who is listening. That the present state of East German culture is prepared to make room for individual expression, albeit within limits, is proven by the official release of Pankow's latest single. It is called "He Wants to Be Different." Read into that what you will.

—Biba Kopf



Men At Work Again

After the phenomenal worldwide success of their first two albums, *Business as Usual* and *Cargo*, Men At Work disappeared to their native Australia for a two-year coffee break. They returned to the musical fore this June with the release of *Two Hearts* and a new lineup. Founding members Ron Strykert, Colin Hay and Greg Ham remain. Bassist John Rees and drummer Jerry Speiser have been replaced by Jeremy Allsop and Mark Kennedy. The band has also added a keyboardist, James Black.

For two years, Men at Work's music was familiar only to the loyal patrons of Melbourne's Cricketers Arms, where they played regularly. Then American producer Peter McLean spotted them and the result was the stateside smash hits *Who Can It Be Now?* and *Down Under* in 1982. They plan to start a world tour this summer. The new single, *Everything I Need*, is a mellow dance tune that takes no risks. It will doubtless be snapped up by mainstream radio stations that are not known for their predilection for the avant-garde.

Yakety Yak

Why am I suddenly having to deal with record company people? I mean, I'm poor anyway. I'd rather be poor than be associated with the slimiest people on earth.

—John Lurie

ZUM TAG DER BEFREIUNG VOM FASCHISMUS

An East Berlin flier (very) loosely translated says, "All commies must die."



Screening Lord Byron: Top stars, old heroes and David Bowie make a traditional musical.

This summer, David Bowie heads a stellar rock 'n' roll cast when he appears in *Absolute Beginners*, the new feature film directed by Julien Temple, the video whiz who made "Undercover" for the Stones and "Jazzin'" for Blue Jean" for Bowie. Temple drafted Ray Davies, Keith Richards, Sade and Paul Weller to record the soundtrack under the helm of Gil Evans, whose jazz arrangements with Miles Davis are legendary.

The story is taken from Colin MacInnes' novel of the same name. Set in London in the late '50s, it spotlights the lives of the first post-war teenage rebels and ends with a race riot in Nottinghill Gate, then the city's largest ghetto. It will be a musical in the *Guys and Dolls*, rather than the *Flashdance*, mold. "The songs have been commissioned as part of the story and will advance the plot," says Temple, who shies from comparisons to *West Side Story*, "because so many videos have ripped it off."

Bowie plays a smooth-talking transatlantic advertising executive who lures Colin, the hero, into his world. It is hoped that Keith Richards will make his acting debut as a music-hall character, and Sade—surprise, surprise—is being asked to play a nightclub singer.

One of the title roles goes to Bardot-esque 16-year-old Patsi Kensit, and the other

will go to another unknown.

Most of the action takes place on a set resembling Soho of the 1950s, then a conglomerate of ethnic communities and the nucleus of night-life people, but nowadays more famous as London's red light district. Producer Stephen Woolley raised \$8 million (a large amount in British movie terms) with Temple's help.

Despite the movie's somewhat esoteric nature, Temple is confident that the project will translate to America, thanks to the pre-release of the soundtrack, which should find a comfortable home on MTV. Says he: "The '50s seem to have been owned by America. It is an era long dominated by cliché images of bobby socks and Coke bottles, but in England there was a very different kind of thing. It was when the Rolling Stones were growing up. America has an image of England as a safe, cozy place, and they do not always understand the undercurrent tensions. But I think the kids will like it; they related to my videos for 'Come Dancing' [The Kinks] and 'Come on Eileen' [Dexy's Midnight Runners], which were very London-oriented."

Bowie, of course, will be the hot box-office draw. "I have a great relationship with him, he's very good at taking direction and works very hard," says Julien. "And

he's a great fan of musicals."

Yes, but can he act, Julien? "I used to be under the impression that he couldn't," he confesses. "But I think the 'Jazzin' film showed a different side to him, and I think he will be very good in this Svengali-type role."

This is the 31-year-old director's second feature. The first was his college graduation film about the Sex Pistols, *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*.

Bowie will also appear in *Labyrinth*, to be shot this summer with director Jim Henson, the man behind *The Muppets* and *The Dark Crystal*. George Lucas is executive producer.

Yakety Yak

I'm very misunderstood, you know. It's the price I have to pay. Beethoven and Michelangelo were misunderstood in their time, too. I'm not concerned about now, but when I leave this earth, I'll be appreciated.

—Marvin Gaye

I think MOR's really good. You make a lot more money.

—Terry Hall, formerly of The Specials, currently of The Colourfield.



French Hissing

Cynics might have expected Trevor Horn and Paul Morley to cash in on the Frankie formula they created and retire to the studio to manufacture Welcome to the Pleasure Clones. Fortunately not—the new ZTT prodigy is Anne Pigalle, a husky-voiced French singer who delivers melancholia in an updated Piaf package. Swooped up by hawk-eyed Paul Morley of ZTT Records after a couple of nightclub appearances in London, her debut album, *Everything Could Be So Perfect*, was released earlier this year. The current climate is ripe for moody chanteuses, thanks largely to the headway made by jazz-lady Sade. However, Pigalle is not keen to be compared. "What I do is not jazz, it's not soul, it's very much the French thing," she grumbles throatily. She is also anxious to avoid the Frankie hysteria.

But then, unlike Holly Johnson, she has beauty on her side. Cavernous cheeks, varnished lips, and melted-chocolate eyes make her perfect glossy-magazine material; plus, she is blessed with that sartorial sensibility which is a trademark of her nationality. The French understand understatement: "I like to wear simple things because they are the strongest. If you wear simple things, what you say is more important." Her only obvious affectation is the change of her surname: Pigalle is Paris' famous red-light district where, coincidentally, Edith Piaf gave her first nightclub performances.

Pigalle's songs, some in French, some in English, are atmospheric ballads dedicated to love ("I cry" in her delicate interpretation). Written with keyboard player Nick Plytus, "they are

a lot to do with love, not in an obvious way, but how people often screw up because they think they want something and then they find they don't. They fight for things and don't realize that the small things can be more important. I understand the way people are."

Horn's masterful production provides a simple backdrop for her voice which conjures up speakeasies, the extras in *Cabaret*, clouds of cigarette smoke, and the post-cocktail unhappy hour when the crowd has its head on its arm. This is not the stuff for extravaganzas at Madison Square Garden or the Maple Leaf Gardens. But she deserves more than passing interest, and although she frowns upon the simplistic comparison to Sade, Sade will open the way for her here; *C'est la vie*.



How a postman, dishwasher, mortician, and bowling-ball-hole driller became Katrina and the Waves.

Talk about strange beginnings. Two military brats (Katrina Leskanich from Kansas and Vince de la Cruz from Texas via Japan—don't ask!) discover each other in a church choir and decide to form a band. They're teenagers and, according to Katrina, it's "something to do, a pretend thing, to be like our heroes of the time." And so Mama's Cooking is born in a little town in Norfolk, England.

Because they're not part of the New Romantic scene, London gigs aren't too rewarding, or frequent, so they play the American military bases where their fathers work. They talk of returning to the States, going to college and forming a band there. Katrina has her bags packed, and is literally on her way out the door when the telephone rings. It's Cambridge University history graduate Alex Cooper, who, "in his very posh and atypical-of-a-rock-and-roller accent," asks if she'd like to join his band. He's heard about her amazing voice and "unsubtle" delivery from some GIs who've seen Mama's Cooking. She brings Vince along; Alex turns out to be a "monster on the drums," and it clicks. A Cambridge pal of Alex's, guitarist Kimberley Rew (his degree is in Anglo-

Saxon archaeology) joins them after his band, the Soft Boys, split. They call themselves Katrina and the Waves, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The name comes from a group Alex and Kimberley once played in called (what else?) The Waves. They lack on "Katrina" on the advice that they'll get more gigs on military bases if they make a point that the singer's female. Did Katrina mind the sexism? Not really. "I wanted anything to get me out of my job. I was doing the classic: washing dishes and bagging groceries" (Vince, meanwhile, was drilling holes in bowling balls, Alex was working in a morgue carrying around dead bodies, and Kimberley was a postman.) "Once people saw me with my tennis shoes on, up there with the rest of them, all their ideas about me being a sex symbol diminished rapidly!"

And so a string of club dates for Katrina and the Waves and attempts at a record deal—but no one was biting, they were all looking for the new Duran Duran. "People kept saying to us, 'Katrina, you've got to do something with your hair, get out the old hair gel and dye it purple. Get a Chinese wardrobe. Change the music. Do something

different.'" At the time, she says, they were "like an '80s version of Creedence Clearwater Revival" with a female singer, of course. Eventually, the band made two albums for the only people who were interested, Canada's Attic Records. In 1982 they released *Walking on Sunshine*, and in 1983, *Katrina and the Waves*. Both albums garnered mass critical acclaim, as did the band's live shows there.

That wasn't the only mileage they reaped from the albums. Composer Vangelis (of *Chariots of Fire* fame) heard them and liked the sound so much, he invited the band to dinner. One thing led to another, and they ended up recording some of their songs in his studio (which happens to be in his living room) in the hope of making an album. But it didn't quite have the Katrina and the Waves style. Or as she puts it, "I think it's because his equipment is really top class, and we sounded better through the crappy systems. It was too clean, and we all agreed it wasn't good. So for the next two days we just ate Greek food and drank red wine and had a lot of fun with the guy." That's why you'll see a "thank you" to Vangelis on their current album.

Christmas 1984 marked a turning point for them—Capitol signed them. The album that is out now (simply titled *Katrina and the Waves*) is actually a compilation of songs from the first two Attic records, but the tunes have been reworked and production and instrumentation tightened up. The first single, the Kimberley-penned "Walking on Sunshine," sprinted up the charts. Now everybody wants to know about Katrina and the Waves. They have just completed a European tour where the crowds were friendly, mainly male and playing air guitars. Next stop is the States for club dates through July, then as supporting act for a major tour. Another single is planned—probably "Do You Want Crying?" written by their bassist, Vince—and another video, perhaps of live concert footage.

How do they feel about their newly found success? They love it. And it's satisfying, after the days of being told to change their image. They managed to defy trends and make music that is a combination of blues, rock, country and Latin music, with a strong '60s overlay; it's quintessential cruisin'-time.

slick—top-of-the-pops. Now that the force of techno-pop is diminishing, it's easier for Katrina and her Waves to find acceptance. And thanks to the likes of Chrissie Hynde, a woman fronting a band is taken more seriously. Chrissie ranks high on Katrina's list of heroines (along with Janis Joplin, Mama Cass, Etta James, Aretha Franklin and Emmylou Harris). So she finds it flattering that people are calling her "the next Chrissie Hynde." But it's frustrating, too. "It's such a physical thing. They look at us and our backgrounds and think there's a similarity. But I think she's a more aggressive person, and I see myself more as the girl next door."

Whatever the comparisons, Katrina and the Waves are ready to make it on their own. And they have one piece of advice for anyone planning to see their show. "Get there early so you can stand right in front, bring umbrellas 'cause we sweat like mad, and bring your dancing shoes."

—Robin Schwartz

Double vision: Katrina and the Waves, (l to r) Katrina Leskanich, Alex Cooper, Vince de la Cruz, Kimberley Rew.

Thou Shalt Obey MTV

Which is more violent: A man burning alive, or a nuclear explosion?

MTV feels safer with an atomic bomb than with a man in flames. Programmers at the network refused to put "666," by Christian rock group DeGarmo & Key, on the air because it showed a character burning alive. But when the band replaced the human torch with a nuclear blast, the video went into light rotation.

The promo shows a computer whiz falling asleep at his terminal while playing a game called 666. In his dreams, he meets the Antichrist and follows him through several sordid scenes. In the uncut version, the Antichrist is seen bursting into flames after the computer whiz pushes a burning oil barrel on him.

Several Christian television programs, including the conservative PTL network, saw nothing wrong with the original edit and aired it, as did Nightflight. The Gospel Music Association, which one might expect to shrink from such things, gave the original version "The Visual Award of Excellence." But MTV was adamant.

"We won't run videos with senseless violence," says David Horowitz, president and chief executive officer of MTV.

"At first we thought we were being singled out," says Ed DeGarmo. "We thought it was a ploy, that MTV didn't want to play a Christian group, but they substantiated that our suspicions were unfounded. We had to make a decision on whether to modify our video or pull it from consideration for MTV. We chose to modify it and, as a result, came up with a stronger message."

Director Marius Penczer replaced the burning-man scene with a shot of a crystal ball showing the miseries of the world—death, war and atomic explosion.

DeGarmo & Key, who come from Memphis, are one of the leading Christian rock acts. Their religious beliefs are heard on their hard rock album *Communication*, which enjoys fast sales from outlets such as Christian book stores. "We look at rock music as amoral, not immoral," says guitarist Dana Key.

—Andrew Roblin

World Beat

Causing worldwide controversy among reggae lovers is Lee "Scratch" Perry's new 12-inch record, "Judgment in a Babylon," which makes some astonishing allegations about island records boss Chris Blackwell. "I saw Chris Blackwell in Nassau, Bahamas," it begins, "drinking the blood of a fowl from a rum glass." And it goes on: "Chris Blackwell is a vampire. He killed Bob Marley and took away his royalties. He gave Bob Marley cancer. Because he [Blackwell] was working with the Mafia," the man responsible for bringing Marley to public attention, has made no comment and his company says no legal action will be taken, although former Island records publicist Jeff Walker notes, "He is a bit pale." . . . Video distributors and retailers should be interested to learn that the "Heartland Reggae" videocassette has sold more than 25,000 copies in its first few months of release.

Continental Video of L.A. put a bargain price of \$29.95 on the compilation film, much of which was shot at the One Love Peace Concert in Kingston in 1978 . . . Junior Reid, late of Voice of Progress, has been tapped by Black Uhuru's founder Duckie Simpson to be the group's new lead singer . . . Former Uhuru member Michael Rose is in the studio with the Wailers . . . Look for Bunny Wailer to play four or five American cities in August/September . . . Joe Higgs is considered by many to be the "Father of Reggae Music." He taught the Wailers, the Wailing Souls and numerous others in the early days of the Trenchtown Squad, and although he has a career that began in the '50s, Higgs has released only two albums . . . Now, at last, an exciting new LP produced with the High Times Players and Chinna Smith is about to be released by Chicago's Alligator label. It includes "So It Go," one of the greatest post-Marley Jamaican 45s . . . Martin Meissonier, King Sunny Ade's producer, was in Hollywood recently for the launching of the Maio Poets LP. They're the South African group he has been grooming in Switzerland and Soweto for some time. Meissonier confirmed that Ade fired his band last November, following several internal disputes on a Japanese tour. Now the King is



Kate Simon

Lee 'Scratch' Perry (aka *The Mad Scientist*) wonders what is wrong with his new typewriter

only playing low-key engagements while he breaks in a new lineup that is said to number 42. Gone are the four backup singers and such essential personnel as Ras Aki, the ta king drummer, and Demola Adepolu, the innovative steel guitar wizard, whose eccentric approach to the pedal steel changed the face of African music. Demola is now completing work on a highly anticipated debut album, tentatively titled "African Cowboy." It uses such disparate elements as country fiddles and ta king drums . . . Meissonier has also been busy with ex-Fela drummer Tony Allen and Ray Lema. The pair have been experimenting with Zairian healing rhythms, with the drum parts duplicated on the synthesizer. Look for the LP. . . Dr. Robert Hill, curator of the Marcus Garvey Papers at UCLA, is dedicating the fourth of the projected 10 volumes in the series to Winston Rodney, the Burning Spear. The world's two leading Garveyites finally met in L.A. in April for the first time and spent hours filing in blanks in each other's knowledge. . . Jah Love, everyone.

Roger Steffens

Roger Steffens, co-host of L.A.'s "Reggae Beat" and of "Reggae Beat International," the world's only syndicated reggae show, will report on world beat every month for Flash.

Yakety Yak

One thing I'm really looking forward to is the day when I'll be able to plug an electrode into my brain and just think the music and let it come out that way.

—Thomas Dolby

Yakety Yak

Ten years ago, the Rolling Stones used to worry if Keith Richards was going to be able to get on stage. Now we wonder if our gear will work. So you see, nothing really changes

—Tom Bailey of the Thompson Twins

A Short History of WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

THE WAY I SEE IT, BRAD, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE PURITANICAL PRACTICE AND THE HEDONISTIC GULLIBILITY IS THE FUSION OF PERMANENCE AND CHANGE, MADNESS AND COOL REASON—YEAH?

THIS GEEZER'S TOTALLY GA-GA!

ABSOLUTELY, ZEKE.



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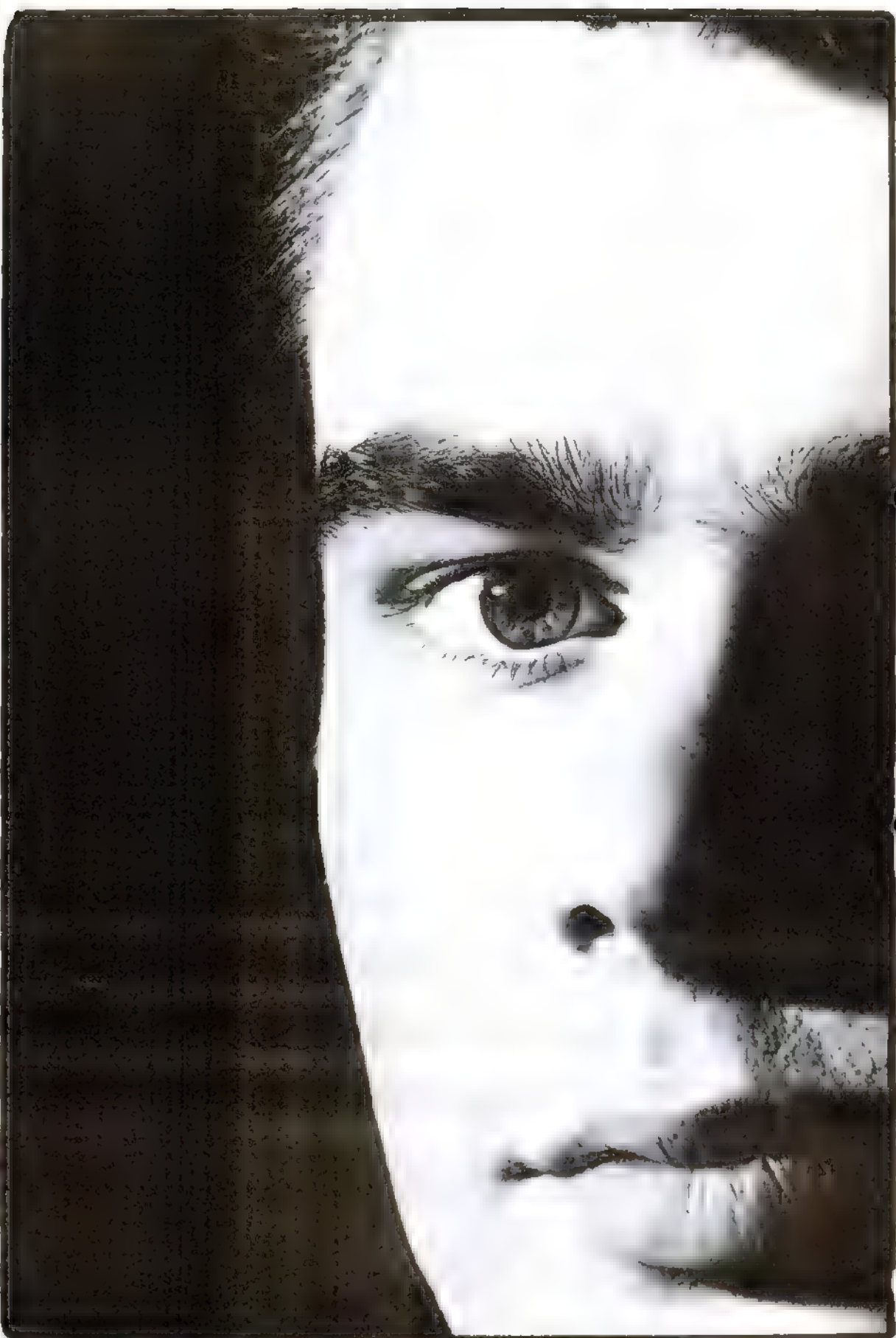
What makes Nik tick? A tiny teen idol speaks out.

Nik Kershaw is one of the latest made-for-MTV clones to ride in on the so-called British Invasion, an invasion, one may note, which has done little for the island's world image—apparently, the entire race is made up of mincing mannequins wearing Day-Glo jewelry. Kershaw was an instant commercial success because teenagers bought his records; he was practically dismissed by *Those Who Know* and *Those Who Think We Should Be Told* (a *k a* the “serious” rock press) as just another pap artist. Him and Howard Jones. What's the difference, anyway? Like Pepsi and Coke, you can't tell them apart if you close your eyes.

But like the refreshing beverages, it is a question of taste. In both these cases, you get mellow, catchy tunes, straightforward lyrics, and a general air of studied inoffensiveness. Kershaw is *Save the Whales*, not sexually molested children. Jones does not pull his pants down on stage. They might cause the 16-year-old heart to throb, the trembling hand to write to them about love or ask what the hell they know about whales anyway, but aged 27 and 30 respectively, Kershaw and Jones are not likely to forget that there's always another haircut creeping up, another face on the T-shirt.

If the secret of longevity in the pop world is a strong faith in oneself and a healthy perspective, Nik Kershaw could be in with a chance. He recently stopped in New York before touring Canada, Japan and Australia. He played a show at the Ritz—the huge dance hall sold out and the audience sang the lyrics to his songs. The next day, he held court in the lobby of Manhattan's quietly classy Algonquin Hotel. His wife Shen (at about five feet, she's one inch taller than her new pop sensation) told me they weren't staying at the Algonquin, but down the road at the cheaper Iroquois, where the colors were awful and the beds made your back ache.

This was the man whom the *New York Post* had reported was “criminally handsome.” Sex appeal did not exactly exude from him like smog and you won't find him starring in *Terminator, Part 54*, but he has all the right bits: gaunt cheekbones, strong chin, easy manner, and the greatest



Andrew Davis

aphrodisiac of art—dry wit.

What do you think it is about you that is special enough to make you succeed here?
I haven't the faintest idea. I don't think about it. I can only present what I've done on my records and if people like it, great, and if they don't...

Does it matter?

Not really. It's nice to have recognition, it's nice to have people into what you are doing, but I can't change to suit anybody. I really shy away from thinking about it, because if I thought about it and analyzed it, I might pick up on one or two things, then start writing the next album thinking, "Well, people really like that," or "I do that really well," and start going over old ground. That is really dangerous—if you start getting paranoid that people aren't going to like you.

So you're working on instinct quite a lot?

Yeah, all the time. Totally.

Does your instinct always work?

It's just luck. What I happen to like writing, people like listening to—so far, I mean, I might go totally obscure and inaccessible and write an avant garde album with people banging the sides of buildings and stuff. But I doubt it somehow. The first album, *Human Racing*, is a little bit different in that most of the songs on it were written in order to get a record contract, so consequently it's going to be the most commercial. But the second album, *The Riddle*, is different because I tried to ignore everything; I tried to ignore what the kids wanted. It sounds very cynical, but it's not like that. I also ignored what the record company was expecting, or wanting to sell, what my manager said, what the press said. I just had to sit down and write what I thought was right. Otherwise, you're just writing other people's music for them and they can write their own, you know?

In England, you have been put forward as a "sexy thing." I don't think your music is particularly sexy.
That's unfortunate, how that happened. It was due to my inexperience, my naïveté about it all. The only thing I knew how to do was play the guitar, write songs, arrange them in a recording studio; I knew all about that. Then all of a sudden you've got the



Courtesy MCA Records

album out and someone says, "Right, you gotta go on telly, what are you gonna wear?" I don't know, clothes are things you get up in the morning and put on and take off when you go to bed. I just didn't know, I didn't care, I didn't think it was important. So they say, "We'll get someone to look after you, put this on, it's really fashionable." It's a very embryonic stage in your career. So I agree and say "OK, fine great." They turn up with this gear, saying, "This is really new on the Kings Road and nobody's got this at all, you put this on and you'll be the tops." You put it on and you look a complete prat, and you wear it for photo sessions and things like that, and that's forever, those photographs. You go to foreign countries and open the publications introducing you. It says, "This is Nick Kershaw" and it's that photograph again, cause they're using old photographs. It was someone else's idea of what I'm supposed to look like, it wasn't me. Sure, I've got people looking out for clothes for me, 'cause I haven't got time to do it myself, but now I wear what I think I look good in. At that time I didn't realize how important it was, and now, although I resent the fact that it is so important, I don't let anyone get around

me. Now, I say no to a lot of things. It sounds like you're being a prima donna, but you have to have control.

Do you think sex is essential to sell pop music at the moment?

No, I don't think so. You've got people like the Bronski Beat. Are you telling me only homosexuals buy their records? And there's Alison Moyet.

It seems to me that pop music is still about sex.
That's a tradition, but traditions are made to be broken. I don't think much of tradition at all. Pop music doesn't have to be about anything. It's like the Surrealists—when they first started painting, they discovered it doesn't have to represent anything at all, it has to be a picture, if it pleases someone or revolts someone, it's valid. It's doing something.

How long have you been trying to get your music heard?

Since 1982. Before that I was a professional musician in a dance band. I've only been writing seriously since then.

Did the record company give you a reason why they were signing you?

No. I was just happy that they did. The trouble is, you never

know what they think you are. It wasn't their fault that things happened the way they did. It was the obvious thing to do; you've got a solo artist who's male, who's under 50 years old, and who doesn't look like Quasimodo. That's the way things are done in the music business, so that's the way they did it.

Do you object when people say things like "he's criminally handsome"?

Sounds like record-company blurb to me. I don't really understand it because I'm not; it's just hype, so yes, it does annoy me. Robert Redford or Richard Gere or someone, yeah, but it's just ridiculous, it never occurred to anybody two years ago, so why should it occur to them now? Apart from the fact it's irrelevant—well, it's not, but I wish it was.

Do you have any plans outside music?

Like just about every other musician, I wouldn't mind having a go at acting. I don't know if I would be any good, but I would like to see if I'm not.

Does video help with that?

No. It gets you used to being in front of cameras and that's about it. It's a completely different thing. You don't need any talent whatsoever to do

a video.

Do you come over well on the camera?

I dunno, I never watch myself. Sends shivers up my back; it is too embarrassing. It physically hurts. I won't let videos in the house.

Did the British music press give you flak?

They give everyone flak, it's irrelevant; they are committing suicide, as far as I'm concerned.

But they can sell records.

Doesn't make a blind bit of difference to me. They can make a difference if you are talking about a very new band on an independent label by bringing them to the attention of a lot of people. What they resent, I think, about me and a few other artists is that we did it without their help. I did it through my records and music, and they hated that. They thought, "We'll, where did he come from?"

What other artists have done the same?

Well, I suppose Howard Jones.

Do you like what he is doing?

Yes, a lot of it. We get on really well, me and Howard. He has the same kind of theories about music as I have. I hate it when people compare us to each other and so does he, because it's a totally different kind of music. They must have ears on somewhere apart from their head, to put it politely.

How are your theories similar?

We're not writing about the same old things. He's got a healthy concern with his environment, that's all I've got as well. Somebody called him "Gandhi with a stylophone," which is very funny but not totally fair.

How much do you think about the audience when you're singing?

Quite a lot, and the more I can see of it, the more I think about it. It can be a bit distracting sometimes, especially when you look at someone and they are not into it whatsoever; I forget the next line.

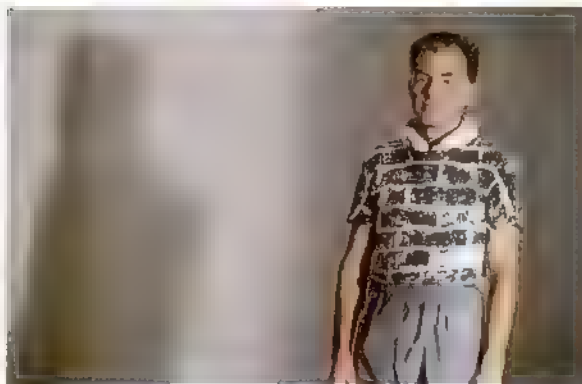
Is your ego going to get ruined?

I don't know. It's taken a fair bit of bashing, but it's fairly intact at the moment.

Jessica Berens



John Eder



Scott Heister

Who Is This Man and What Does He Think He Is Doing?

The Alien Comic (aka Tom Murrin) has made a career out of wearing Technicolor masks, cardboard box headdresses, lurex tunics, paint-spattered pajamas and robes decorated with severed hands. He is amusing and weird, but not exactly a comedian—more a cracked actor with a bottomless supply of visual puns. Alien performances have been seen all over the States, and he has opened for The Police, James Brown, John Cale and the Stranglers. "The audience would start yelling and throwing beer bottles as soon as I got out there, but I didn't

care. I would let them have it. My show would be fast and furious. Crazy. But whatever I did, I did it and they had to take it." Nowadays he works on his own, playing cozy clubs in downtown Manhattan where the local bohemians are subjected to his high-pitch, nonstop, running commentary coupled with 10 costume changes in 10 minutes. "The things that work for me seem to be when I tap into that source of craziness and at the same time maintain a relationship with the audience where they trust me. They think, 'This guy is as sane as I am.'"

Let them eat cake: Famine relief project divides Nashville

The music community's famine relief snowball turned slushy when it rolled into Nashville this spring. Unbeknownst to each other, country singer Ronnie McDowell and a clique of record company executives both planned to gather country music's biggest stars for charity singles. McDowell got his project, a song called "One Big Family," into the recording studio first, and promptly suffered the wrath of Nashville's most powerful record labels.

When RCA's local chief Joe Galante learned about "One Big Family," he reacted quickly. "Yes, I told our artists not to participate," he says. "I felt that instead of being a major event, as was the 'USA for Africa' single, it would be one of many trying to duplicate it."

So, RCA artists—among them such country music legends as Alabama, The Judds, Ronnie Milsap and

Louise Mandrell—did not join the sessions, although all were invited and some had promised their services.

MCA stalwarts Lee Greenwood and members of the Oak Ridge Boys were also asked to sing, but did not appear; neither did any of their labelmates, although the company declined to comment on the matter.

McDowell discovered the problem less than 24 hours before the scheduled start of the master vocal session. Says Steve Von Hagel, who directed the "One Big Family" video: "Louise Mandrell called and said, 'I want to do it, but my label says I can't.' Then the whole thing started unfolding."

When word reached McDowell that the record companies had their own plans for raising funds, he offered to join forces with them, but was rebuffed.

"I offered to give them our project. If we could get all the people together, we could raise millions, but without having heard 'One Big Family' they rejected it," he says. "They said they hadn't

approved it. I think it's a real shame."

Columbia artist George Jones (the only one from his company) sings the song's first line, and Polygram's The Kendalls attended the session. As for among the nearly 40 entertainers who worked under the banner "The Heart of Nashville" were Chet Atkins, Tanya Tucker, and the Jordanares, though most of the participants were either unsigned or on independent labels. The single is to be distributed by Complanet Records, one of Nashville's largest independents, and profits will be divided between charities in Africa and America.

Meanwhile, those who vetoed the session are still toying with the idea of doing their own fund-raiser. "We're exploring it further, but don't want to jump on any bandwagon," says Dale Franklin Cornelius, executive director of the Nashville Music Association, who has been meeting with local executives to discuss the project.

—Andrew Roblin

"Of the 500 reggae shows in America, the most influential is Reggae Beat."—CASHBOX

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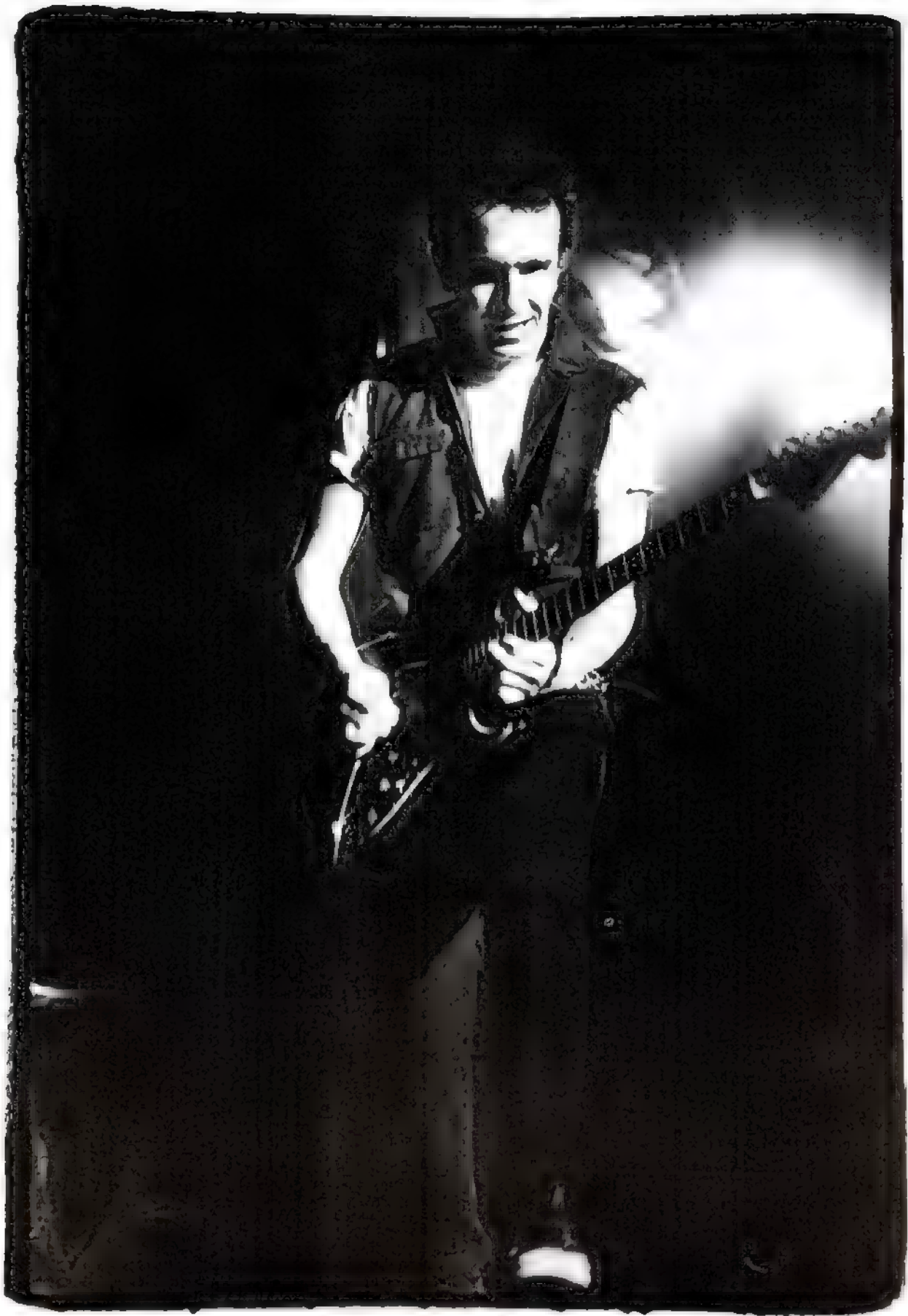


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GETTING CLOSE TO

THE EDGE

Dave Evans' distinctive, droning, acidic guitar playing dominates U2 and has paved the way for groups ranging from Big Country to The Alarm. Yet, he is anxious to create a new sound.

Interview by Jeff Spurrier

When U2's first LP, *Boy*, was released in 1980, rock fans around the world sat up and took notice, shaking off a post-punk funk brought on by a too-rich diet of fluffy new romantics and weary synth bands.

It was something of a shock when, out of the strife and poverty of Dublin, came a quartet of fresh-faced Irish boys, brimming with a sense of celebration, optimistic sincerity and political relevance. Their songs evoked an innocence that was neither naive nor forced, but simply a hopeful attempt to better a bad situation.

Then, as now, the message of U2 has been one of peace and an end to human persecution. In another band the lyrics might come through as preachy self-righteousness or Pollyanna-esque hand wringing. But somehow, one believes singer Bono when he asks "How long must we sing this song?" in "Sunday, Bloody Sunday."

U2 are believable thanks to the raw emotion of Bono's vocals, the perfect counterpoint to the distinctive guitar work of The Edge (a.k.a. Dave Evans), the man most responsible for defining U2's early sound.

The ringing, droning, acidic style of The Edge's guitar playing (compared by many critics to Tom Verlaine's) dominates in varying degrees all the band's albums, from *Boy* to, most recently, the Brian Eno-produced *Unforgettable Fire*. The "U2 sound"—a concept repudiated by The Edge—paved the way for big guitar rockers on both sides of the Atlantic, from Scotland's Big Country to Georgia's R.E.M. It's a fine line to walk—the distance between monolithic rock bombast and genuine soul is merely a matter of perspective. But as the following interview demonstrates, The Edge knows exactly where he stands.

SPIN: How did you get the nickname?

EDGE: It's basically part of my teenage heritage. One of those nicknames that just stuck.

SPIN: Who gave it to you?

EDGE: I think it was Bono. We knew each other when we were about 16 and were attempting to be a band. Bono had been Bono for a good many years before that. Bono's real name is Paul Hewson. When we became professional and started recording, it seemed to break down the first barrier to have people call you by your nickname rather than a name that really wasn't used anymore. At this stage, even people in my family call me The Edge. So it's semi-official.

SPIN: Over the four albums I've noticed a real transition in the guitar playing. How do you see the change?

EDGE: A lot of people in America and in England see U2 as a sound, as a formula, and really it's not. It's a spirit. The band has this amazing uplifting quality. I think the individuality of my guitar playing was great in Italy, but it struck me and the others that it was beginning to restrict us some.

SPIN: It was too distinct, ve?

EDGE: Yeah. People were actually just seeing us in that small context. So with *War*, almost consciously I tried to broaden the base of what is accepted as U2's sound. We tried to pull the guitar in a lot of different directions. We dispensed with a lot of the echo, and brought it down to some of the more brash crash chords. At the same time we used some more acoustic guitar and slide guitar. I did this mainly because if people just think of U2 as a sound then they're really missing the point.

SPIN: What kinds of guitars do you use?

EDGE: My main guitar is now a Fender Stratocaster, but for a good many years I used a Gibson Explorer as my main guitar. I also have a 1945 Epiphone lap steel.

SPIN: Do you play that in concert?

EDGE: Yeah, I play that during "Surrender." And I've got a few other interesting guitars that I use occasionally. One is a Bond guitar. It's an English company that brought out this guitar without frets.

SPIN: A fretless guitar?

EDGE: It's fretless in that there is no fret wire. They've developed a ledge for each fret, which graduates slowly down to the next fret. It looks like a serrated fingerboard from the side, with little ridges and sharp troughs. It has the same effect as a fret, but with better intonation, easier slide, and things like that. I'm just now getting into the guitar. I play it on stage some.

SPIN: How did getting the lap steel change your playing of regular guitar? Does the lap require a different kind of mentality?

EDGE: Yeah, it actually does. You can be very rough with it. You've got huge strings and a gap of almost half a centimeter between the strings and the fingerboard. You can be quite physical with the instrument because you can get some good sounds if you press hard. It's almost a totally different medium. It's a different sound as well. I tend to play my guitars full out—volume and tone turned up full. But with the lap it's so topky and full that I've had to take a lot of the top end off with the tone control.

SPIN: You concentrate quite a bit on the top strings.

EDGE: Yeah, I suppose that's true. That was part of the early development of the group. We very much grew up together, and the sound did rely on myself, and Adam

as well, to fill out around the drums because there were no other guitarists. So he tended to play quite a full bass sound, not just the usual sort of woody, mellow sound. And I tended then to fill out the top end of the thing. So even my chords are very top-string oriented. It gives you a different sound than the regular rock format. I don't use crash chords in the accepted sense. It's more of a picking style, although not in a country way.

SPIN: What sort of effects do you use? You said you've

cut back on the echo somewhat.

EDGE: I still use a Memory Man, which is one of the cheapest analog delay units you can buy, but it really does work. I'm aware of the sort of nonsense in guitar technology, and I've found that the simple things seem to work the best. I use just basically a Strat, an old Vox 80-30, and a few cheap effects. The more expensive effects don't really have that much more to offer. Particularly for live work—it's broad strokes.

SPIN: What is the songwriting process? How do the songs get written?

EDGE: It's quite an involved process. It's always the music first, but the music really evolves like a statue, a sculpture. It begins with an inspiration from anybody. Probably a guitar line or the beginnings of a song, although sometimes a bass line or a drum line. Once we have that initial spark, it's a hand to the pumps. Everyone chips in, and it becomes alive from the start. We change it around, but the essential emotion and feeling is never lost. By the time we've finished a piece of music, the lyrics almost fall into place because most of the emotion is already present in the music.

SPIN: How long does that process take?

EDGE: It varies. For instance, "I Will Follow" took 20 minutes, but it can take a month or two to actually have a song finished, adding bits, taking it down. And then when you record you start again to a certain extent. Really, a U2 song is never finished until it's on a record and even then, live, we do change things. Improvisation is quite an important part of our playing.

SPIN: On *War* you brought in violins. Was that a part of the change you spoke of?

EDGE: Yeah. The violins almost indicated themselves. It was an instrument we were all interested in.

SPIN: Why?

EDGE: Because of its essential Irishness. Also it has an emotive quality that we felt would work in the context of some of the songs. On that album we were letting the inspiration dictate the production techniques, whereas before we had been more of a live band and presented each idea to the band and put it through that



Leslie Finken

format. A band like the Rolling Stones does that very much, where each song is very much a part of the band's sound as well. We were trying to be a bit more experimental in our arrangements, so the other instruments—the violins and the trumpets—were part of that SPIN: Do you see synthesizers as eventually becoming part of the U2 sound?

EDGE: Possibly. I'm not against synthesizers, although personally I don't relate too closely to the synth movement that is happening currently. I think it's extremely cold, and the emotions are very inhuman. But I think it's possible we'll use them at some stage. We have that sort of artistic freedom, and I think we'll experiment more with electronic instruments as time goes on. SPIN: How involved does the band get with the making of its videos?

EDGE: Very involved. U2 is a very organic thing in the best sense of the term. It's very much a group effort. Most of the ideas come from the band, and then we talk to the technical people. They're quite loose. We don't work with story lines so much as images, almost like extensions from the lyrics.

SPIN: Where was "New Year's Day" done?

EDGE: In a place called Sälen, in Sweden, about 300 miles north of Stockholm. It was really cold that day, 16 degrees below zero. I think that sometimes U2 as a band comes across as being rather cold, but I think that's because of our need to approach real topics. As a band I don't think we deal in escapism very much. We find it far more interesting to take real topics, but deal with them in an optimistic way. I think the problem with the synthesizer movement is that they've lost the human touch; but at the same time they've gotten away from any sort of realism and deal totally in that sort of bland pop escapism. I think U2 is different. We have that kind of personality where we're not going on stage or on record as anything but ourselves. The honesty and commitment in the band is really the important thing to understand about us.

SPIN: You think that realism is an essential factor in music?

EDGE: I think it's ultimately the most worthwhile thing. Art generally should relate to something real. I don't think it's a world-changing medium, but just to have the honesty of the artist coming through untainted is a very positive thing. The spotlight on a situation is always good where you can really see something that's tangible and real reflected in art. Without laboring it. We don't sit down and decide what we're going to write about. It's a very natural thing. We let things come through, and certainly on *War* that's true more than any other LP. We just decided to stand up and be counted on some things that we feel strongly about.

SPIN: I read somewhere that you performed "Sunday Bloody Sunday" in Belfast, and you were thinking of not doing the song anymore if the audience objected. EDGE: Yeah. We were quite nervous about it. We were all aware that this show was coming up and the song was in the set. We finally sat down before we went on stage and decided we were going to play it. Just before the song, Bono announced we were going to do a new song, and he read out some of the lyrics and the title and announced that if the audience did not like it, they should tell us and we wouldn't play it again. After the song there was incredible applause. That expelled any doubts I had about bringing up that subject in a song in our own homeland.

SPIN: What kind of draw do you have in Ireland? Is it mixed?

EDGE: Yes, it is. The whole Irish thing is mostly fear but there is a militant kind of sentiment that makes people get involved in illegal groups. Generally speaking, there is the potential for unity. It's happened before with other bands like *Stiff Little Fingers*, who also draw a mixed crowd. That's why we were sort of nervous about doing "Sunday Bloody Sunday." We didn't want to present anything that was potentially divisive to a mixed crowd. The title conjures up so many strong feelings in Ireland. To sweep it under the carpet would be actually worse. What we've done is taken that skeleton from the closet and shown it to everyone and said: "Look. This is going on. What are we going to do about it?" I think people are respecting that outspokenness, not because it's risky, but because they see it as being honest. It's not political posturing. It's something that we have felt strongly about for a while and decided to come out into the open with.

SPIN: Do you always want to stay in Dublin for your writing and recording projects?

EDGE: Yeah. I think too many bands lose sight of their relevance. There's just a certain amount of songs you can write about being on the road, and then it gets a bit boring. The Dublin connection is quite crucial to this band. It was one of the reasons why we were very different at the start. We weren't a London band, part of that scene. In a few years we might move on, but not at the moment. The relationship [with their surroundings] works well now. Also it helps to keep our heads screwed on right and feet on the ground. I don't believe in the whole rock star idea. Whenever we meet people after the shows we always treat them as people, which I think always surprises them.

SPIN: How do you see your relationship with the audience? It seems very personal and almost intimate at times, even at something huge like the US Festival a couple of years ago.

EDGE: That was a strange thing. It was so big, and physical limitations were obviously a factor. I think the spirit of the band on a good day is even up to that. I think we managed to break through on that day. At most of our concerts—the word that comes to mind is "celebration"—there is a unity, an openness that does tran-

scend those distance barriers. At the end of our shows there's usually an incredible uplifting feeling in the whole place. Whereas at the start of a show people may be very cool and aware of themselves, at the end they've forgotten themselves and are more aware of the whole thing. The show is like a catalyst.

SPIN: Do you feel that the band's spiritual focus and belief in God is something that interferes at all with audience appreciation?

EDGE: It's one of the more important elements of the band's particular ethos, but still it's just part of U2. I don't see it as anything that should be exploited medially. It's almost just our personal views and way of life. It is important to me. It's the most important thing in my life. Too many Christians in music have really got it wrong.

SPIN: How? Because they make it such an integral part of their image?

EDGE: Yeah. Again, I think that actions speak far louder than words. If people go to the trouble of trying to understand our lyrics, and can see something of our lives in what we do, say, and how we work, it speaks a lot louder than any sermon or what we might tell people. I think respect is important. We've never felt that our Christian beliefs should be exploited. It is very much a spiritual thing. It's not religiously based, because you can imagine that religion in Ireland at this stage is like a four-letter word. It's meant so much heartache, so much bloodshed. I really have no time for it. I think that often religion is a replacement for God. It's just the rulebook, the structure that keeps things ticking, but beyond that.

SPIN: I was surprised to read about the spiritual aspect because I had never thought of U2 as a spiritual band.

EDGE: I think there's a definite spiritual aspect, especially on the *October* album. I think that is really part of humankind. It's just something that has been laid apart for so long. It certainly is a relevant part of human life.





OUR TOWN

The buzz is that Athens, Georgia, is the hippest music scene in America, but R.E.M.'s bassist puts it in perspective.

Article by Mike Mills

When you mention "the Athens scene" to anyone who's been here for four or five years, they get weird. When we started—when the Side Effects were starting—and Pylon and the Method Actors were playing, it was just people playing for the fun of it at parties or makeshift clubs. It was not a scene at all, and now it kind of is. We were originally here as University of Georgia students—come and go. There's always this big turnover of horseflesh.

Athens is a great town, a college town. There's about 24,000 students. The entire population is about 60,000. It's a small place. When summer school is over in August, and everyone's on vacation, you can lie down in the middle of Broad Street. They might as well turn the traffic lights off because it is dead with a capital D.

Largely, it's just the chemistry of a lot of kids together in one place. But that's true for almost any college town, some more than others. We've got a big, powerful radio station—WUOG—one of the most powerful college stations I've ever heard anywhere—10,000 watts. And they support local bands really well. They supported us when we needed it. College radio is the savior of rock 'n' roll in America right now. If it were not for college radio, all the good bands that are doing well would have nowhere to go. There's nowhere they could tour if there were no college radio stations to play their records and insure that they would have some kind of crowd when they came there.

There are some great bands here. Number one: The Kilkenny Cats. They used to be non-melodic, drone, gloom-and-doom stuff. But they've grown as a band and as musicians and added a lot more melody to what they've been doing. Now they are kind of a dark band, but pop.

The second-best is the Squalls. The Squalls deserve to be famous. They've got an EP. I don't mean to use "hippies" in a derogatory sense, but it's a bunch of people that are a little older than me. They're not students; they live here, have been here for a long time. They're not trying to be trendy, famous, or successful. They're just playing because they're having a good time and they're a lot of fun to see. That's the way it oughta be. In a perfect world, they'd get rich.

Dreams So Real—good band, name's far too hard to say. Also worth mentioning are Banned 37, the Barbeque Killers—great name, even if the band was really sloppy—and Fashion Battery. Normally, I don't care that much for fusion, but the Land Sharks do fusion with a really good kick. They add a lot of energy to it, instead of just technical proficiency.

There are only two clubs worth mentioning for live music: the 40 Watt and the Uptown Lounge. There are other clubs with different kinds of music, but nothing I'm really interested in.

The 40 Watt Club has had three different locations before its present one. The one that it's in now used to be a fern bar. The Uptown Lounge is right across from the police station. It used to be a porno theater and they've been working on it steadily since then, trying to rearrange it. I guess they've got all the stains off the floor. None of these places has been around more than a year.

Tyrone's was the best club Athens has ever seen. Unfortunately, it burned down a year and a half ago. It was a sad, sad day. Everybody was upset. The suspended heater broke off its moorings, fell onto the stage, and BANG—there everything went. It happened about four in the morning. It would have been better if people had been there because they would have been able to stop it. It was a total loss.

It was great because the people that ran it would let anybody play there, and get the door. You charge two dollars and you get all the money. I made \$30 and I thought I was rich. They made their money off the bar—and they made a ton. The only thing that didn't burn in the fire was my tab. They went sifting through the rubble and found it—\$40.

Most kids here drink. They drink a lot of beer—pitchers of beer. As it gets warmer they hang out at the pool, or go downtown. Downtown is the main drag. There's downtown, then there's north campus, and the dorms, so it's really accessible. You don't need a car.

Up on College Street: Ruthless Records. Good store. But the one that's been here the longest, right up across the corner from Ruthless, is Wuxtry. It's really small and all it has is used records.

Fraternities are very much a part of what goes on here. They have huge parties. They're maybe 15 or 20 percent of the total student population. It's usually the ones with money. There are not too many art students in the fraternities and sororities. They're a real conservative, right-wing group of people. But fine, so what? That's the way it is. They don't completely ignore music, such as what's playing at the 40 Watt. They come out and lots of times they enjoy it. That was what we did, when we first started. We were the first band among several that drew a cross-section of people. Pylon and

Above: Mike Mills meets the press. Below: R.E.M.'s singer, Michael Stipe, ponders a whirligig





Terry Allen

the Method Actors would draw the creative, left-wing people that cared. Then, when we started, we got everything from dormies and fraternity people to the arty types. We were accessible—without trying to be.

Every college in the country, University of Georgia included, is getting more and more conservative. It's changed since I started going to school here—the way it has everywhere else. Most kids in college, all they care about is getting a degree and getting a good job. Who's to say that they're wrong? A lot of kids here are for Reagan. Not most of them, but as many here as in Topeka, or Houston, or Albuquerque, or New Brunswick, New Jersey.

"You are the world and everybody is the world, but who needs to be told that?"

If you compare youth culture now to the '60s, it's certainly not the same. Bob Dylan changed people's lives. People listened to Bob Dylan and wanted to go out and change the world. If you want to think about youth culture as one spearhead that's gonna make a difference in the world, it's not gonna happen. The '60s were a time of political activism. It went from innocence to cynicism really quickly. And now the situation is not so much apathy as realization that there's not a lot you or anyone else personally can do.

Any rock star who thinks he's gonna make a big difference is deluded. Look at the biggest: Prince, Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen. Are they gonna inspire anyone to do anything? No! They're gonna inspire them to go out and buy a record—that's it. Millions have, and millions will. Great. That's what music is about; it's entertainment. What do kids in Athens or anywhere want? They don't want anything. Nobody's that dissatisfied that they need an icon to lead them into the new age. It just isn't that way anymore. Nobody's gonna change the world, and everybody might as well realize that.

I guess my attitude is more of what a small town mentality is about. If you grew up in New York or in L.A., it would change your viewpoint on just about everything. There's no time to sit back and think about

things. Our music is closer to everyday life—things that happen to you during the week, things that are real. It's great just to bring out an emotion, rather than a jingoism—better just to make someone feel nostalgic or wistful or excited or sad. You are the world and everybody is the world, but who needs to be told that? I don't. I don't want to hear about it. I know my place in the world, and most people do, and they don't want to hear it from a bunch of overinflated musicians.

It's not isolated here—you can't act like this is Antarctica. But that's the way people think—that you're down here in the pine forests "hangin' niggers from trees." The South is a weird place. If you go out in the



Terry Allen



Todd A. Eberle



Terry Allen

woods you're gonna end up with a lot of inbreeding and the kind of people that are behaving really strangely. But would you want to live in the suburbs of Boston, or Long Island, or the south side of Chicago? Take your pick. People are dead anywhere you go. Human nature is a sorry thing. And you can do is try to improve it.

Some guy down the street and his 12-year-old son beat an 11-month-old dog to death yesterday. He said the dog was getting in his yard and chasing birds, and enticing his dog to chase birds. They beat the dog to death with a board with a nail through it. They pounded the fuckin' dog in the head. The guy's a nut, a psycho. He doesn't belong in human society. But that could happen in Iowa, or in Wyoming.

Look at those two mountain men in Montana. The man and his son kidnapped that jogger for a wife. The father was afraid that his son, who was like 17, was getting tired of living all alone in the mountains. So the father said, "Wehull, we gawna get choo a waife, boy." And they went down to the national park and kidnapped this woman jogger. It's the truth! You get out in the woods anywhere—not just Georgia, not just the South—and there're gonna be some weird people doing weird things.

Reverend Howard Finster lives in Summerville, Georgia, up near Rome, about three hours from here. We go up and see him all the time. He very seldom leaves Summerville, but lots of art students from here and the University of North Carolina, South Carolina and North Carolina State all come down and he p him with whatever projects he's doing.

He's a tremendous guy. His idea is that he is a traveler in space and was put here to bring the word of God to people through folk art. That's all he does. He sleeps about three hours a night and every waking hour he churns out this great folk art.

For years he was a traveling evangelist and finally he had a vision. He is "Howard Finster, Man of Visions," that is his title. His vision said: "Don't travel anymore. Sit here in Summerville and make your church and have people come to you." He built a church by himself, three stories high with a big steeple, on his property. He buried all his tools in a cement walkway and said, "I give up my tools. I don't need them anymore because I'm dedicating my life to God." He's selling in New York for unbelievable amounts of money. He was on "The Tonight Show" and blew Johnny Carson away. It's part of his religion—reaching people through art. He is making art to spread the word of God.

He helped Michael [Stipe] with the album cover for *Reckoning*. Michael drew the outline for this two-headed snake, and gave it to Howard to fill in. And Howard did—in incredible detail. It was screwed up in the way it was printed. What Howard did was so much more detailed than what finally came out.

Dave Pierce is the publisher of *Tastyworld*. He's put out five issues in about nine months—it's an iffy thing. If and when, usually when. Right now it's 95 percent local, but I think he has ambitions of eventually expanding it into a national thing. But it's great—because there are a lot of bands here. And a lot of bands come through from out of town, playing at the 40 Watt, or the Uptown, or at Legion Field, which is the university-sponsored concerts that they have outdoors. There's something to talk about—especially if you come out

Tyrone's:
"The only thing that didn't burn in the fire was my tab. They went sifting through the rubble and found it—\$40."

every two months. There's plenty to fill up the pages. If you come out every month, there might not be so much.

Athens is not the incredible, bizarre happening that people would peg it as. It's just not as unique as people think, but it's a great place. The fact that the B-52s left Athens and became famous, that a lot of media attention is focused here, makes it easier for people to get into bands and do things—because they know there are going to be people paying attention. When we started touring, we'd say, "We're from Athens." People would go: "Oh, Athens—the B-52s, Pylon—great. We'll book you." But after we played there once or twice, Athens became totally irrelevant.

You're out-of-the-way here. You can do things as a band without all this pressure. When we started out, we were terrible, just like every band that starts out. But we had a whole year to play around the South and get better—and to learn to deal with adversity, playing at pizza parlors and biker bars and gay discos. We can play down here, we can go to Tennessee, North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, and improve the band—our songwriting, stage presence, everything—without ever hearing about it. But in New York or London, the minute you start playing—ZANG! There's the local rock magazine reviewing your show and making all these judgments about you.

People come here thinking, "It's a scene and I'm going to nurture my musical talent." That's a mistake. By this point, the other bands that were our contemporaries have broken up, and most of the bands in Athens now are of a different attitude. A lot of them are thinking, "We can be a band, and we can attract attention, and get out of Athens." That never occurred to Pylon or the Side Effects or us. It was totally unconscious. The only important thing was playing around town, playing at parties, having fun.

The innocence is gone. I don't want to be sentimental and maudlin about it—it's not as though that was the golden age of Athens. But at the same time, there was just a different sort of attitude. That sort of thing, just by the nature of what it is, can't last.

The booking policies of the clubs now are no more exclusive. Anybody can play at the 40 Watt, anybody

can play at the Uptown. There's competition for the weekends. The trouble is, during the week it's gotten really slack and people don't go out; everybody's studying. Most of these kids here know they're in school. People think it's a scene, and there's gonna be 500 people in a club on a Wednesday night. It ain't gonna happen.

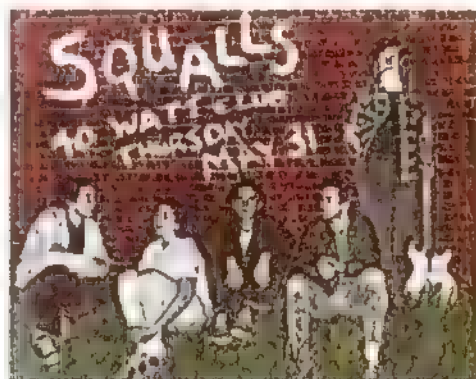
Athens is a great place—I love it. You get a band together—great. You've got your chance. But that happens lots of places. If The Embarrassment from Lawrence, Kansas, had become a huge national hit, people would have gone, "God, there's Get Smart, and The Mortal Micronauts—LOOK AT ALL THOSE BANDS! What is it about Lawrence, Kansas, that produces these bands?" Look at Austin, Texas—Stevie Ray Vaughn, Willie Nelson. It could be anywhere.

People, especially if they're far away, like to see this grouping coming out of an area: You've got the North Carolina group—Mitch Easter, the dB's, Chris Stamey, whatever else. You've got Athens—Oh, OK, let's Active, the Method Actors, R.E.M., Love Tractor, The Side Effects, the B-52s. It's enticing, it's romantic, it's easy and it's a lot of fun to think of a town: "Wow! What's going on in this town that keeps churning out these great groups?" Three or four years ago, no one would have thought of this being a "scene." It was just people having a good time, and people playing at parties and enjoying themselves.

People actually moved here thinking, "I'm going to get in on the Athens scene." And they end up hating us and people that've been here five years because we're not out every night supporting local bands. I'll go ahead and say it. I think a lot of the local bands resent us. It's a backlash because it's like our fault that we made Athens a "scene." And a lot of people here go: "Oh, there go those hot-shot rock stars." Sorry! I just live here because I like it. I didn't ask to be in this band, it just happened that way.

I go to New York all the time. I know exactly what the difference is. I want to keep living in Athens. I spend half my time somewhere else, which is what makes Athens so great. To me it's a relief to come here. I have lots of friends, there's a lot to do. I get out on the road for three months at a time and I'm wired to the max. I'm just nuts and I go home to Athens and go, "Aaahh." You wind down—what a great place to come home to.

Athens on a Sunday morning (top pg. 22, l to r): Dana Downs, Mark Cline of Love Tractor, Jerry Ayers of Limbo District, Fred Schneider of the B-52s, Vanessa Driscoll of Pylon, and the ubiquitous Tom Rubnitz, (bottom pg. 22, l to r): Dreams So Real are Drew Worsham, Trent Allen, and Barry Marler, (bottom right, pg. 22): R.E.M. (l to r): Pete Buck, Michael Stipe, Mike Mills and Bill Berry



Five: Courtesy Don Matthews Archives

Slavoj

The music that Australian Nick Cave made with the Birthday Party was stark, abrasive and enjoyed by few. This seems to have delighted him and he continues to stomp tradition.

The Caveman Cometh



Andrew Collin

Article by Kristine McKenna



Blanchard

Nicholas Edward Cave was the second and surviving of two identical twins born in an Australian outback township in late 1957. Throughout his life, he has felt his brother's presence. As a child, this pressure proved too much; Cave became such a troublemaker that he and his family were forced to move away. Possibly, this early uprooting has sustained Cave's continued fascination for isolated country towns and the mentalities that flourish there. Though never totally comfortable in a city atmosphere, Cave was forced to come to terms with Melbourne and channel his restlessness into creativity. In a small, rented house he taught himself how to play the piano. "I worked hard and got pretty good," admits Cave, who had found his vocation. Along with some friends from school, he formed the Boys Next Door. That band became The Birthday Party.

The Birthday Party was the first group of musicians to articulate the sound of a crypt door grinding shut. They quickly acquired a reputation for abrasiveness. Abandoning conventional song structure, Cave sought new ones for the ominous fatalism of his lyrics and chaotic self-expression. The music repelled many audiences and violated many sensibilities. But it didn't make them rich.

Fired by an increasing passion for the blues, Cave then gathered a new group of musicians. The Bad Seeds—and released his debut solo LP, *From Her to Eternity*. The opening track, "Tupelo," is loosely based on John Lee Hooker's classic taking blues of the same name. Tupelo is also the birthplace of one of Cave's few admitted heroes, Elvis Presley. In this song, he creates a legend based on the King's birth, blended with Old Testament mythology. As with earlier records, the Scriptures often serve as inspiration, with neither reverence nor sacrilegious intent.

"In the Ghetto" is a menacing cover of one of Elvis' last singles. The title "Knocking on Joe" is an expression used by American prisoners to describe the desperate measures they sometimes took in order to avoid hard labor: crushing their own fingers, hands and legs. The album includes a version of Leonard Cohen's "Avalanche," as well as a handful of songs that investigate Cave's conception of the American South: a place he envisions as a swampy, nasty phantasmagoria of sin and guilt.

Though Cave works at the fringes of rock, he is more a snarling country singer—a shambling, stumbling figure. An oversized sweater, with fluffballs from over-washing, hangs loosely from his consumptively thin frame. A bottle of Jack Daniel's appears as a seemingly permanent appendage.

His new album, *Knocking on Heaven's Door*, is supposed to be coming out soon. But there's been a little delay, since one of the tracks, "Wanted Man," is a Bob Dylan song and no one is quite sure how Dylan will take Cave's treatment of his work. Cave is scheduled to tour the States this year, but that is not certain either. He could not appear at a recent New York gig because he had accidentally set his passport on fire.

On one occasion, flying back from his native Australia, he managed to ground an airplane. After vomiting in someone's lap, he was hauled off the jet and treated for epilepsy. A search for drugs was stalled by the fact that no one could remove his trousers because they were too tight.

The following interview took place in a hot, empty bar in Tijuana, near the Mexican/American border.

SPIN: Do you live recklessly?

CAVE: I wouldn't consider it reckless... that's the wrong word. I'd describe the way I live as a gradual deadening process.

which has been going on for a long time. With each year that passes, I find myself able to do more and more things that a year before I would've refused to do, because I would've considered them irresponsibly negative. I find myself developing a more cynical approach to things, and it's a selfish way to live. But truthfully, I'm totally unconcerned about the effect that what I do artistically has on people.

SPIN: Were you ever concerned?

CAVE: Early on, I suppose I was concerned about being accepted by artistic people, but I'm not any longer. When I was 16, my idea of approval was to be able to elicit a response of shock or disgust from my parents. It was ridiculously trite and wasn't an artistic thing at all.

SPIN: Were you always rebellious?

CAVE: There were waves of it throughout my school years. I can remember going from not having much communication with anybody to times when I was at boarding school and was surrounded by grotesque individuals. The boarding school I went to was full of the most disgusting people. There was one period where I seemed to assume the role of leader among the people I hung around with. I'd say "Let's do this" and everyone would do it. Then there were episodes where I'd round a corner at school and be tripped, and there would be a mob of hippies watching and laughing. It was a really gross situation.

SPIN: How long do you expect to live?

CAVE: Speaking realistically, I expect I'm way past middle age at the moment. At the same time, just as I had a fantasy about Trijuna, I have this fantasy of old age, of having worked up to an honest age and retiring. I see retirement years as being a reward one earns, but unfortunately for most people it's some kind of nightmare. But to retire, feeling satisfied with what I'd done with my life, feeling I had no more obligations to myself or to anyone else and could live however I liked, seems a worthy thing to aspire to. I like the idea of being passed off as an eccentric old man.

SPIN: Are there things in your life that you regret?

CAVE: The basic fuel for my creativity is a drive to create something really concrete. To feel that, then suddenly find yourself with this flat disc that contains all your year's ideas on it... one usually feels totally inadequate and embarrassed. There's a real impulse to do something else to qualify it or make some excuse for it. And yes, I do tend to feel pretty bad about certain things that have happened through my own insensitivity or disregard for other people, but I try not to dwell on the evidence left behind. I tend to see my life as a process of stepping on other people, innocent people.

SPIN: Do you consider yourself a sociable person?

CAVE: I think of myself as fairly well misanthropic.

SPIN: How do you feel about the fans you attract?

CAVE: I have this horrible feeling that they see me as being the epitome of new-wave underground rebellion, this year's Iggy Pop. With a lot of the Birthday Party's music, I can understand how that might be all they'd pick up, but I think there's a

"I have this horrible feeling that my fans see me as the epitome of new-wave underground rebellion..."

lot more to the new record than that.

SPIN: How often do you meet people you feel could prove to be a menace to your well-being?

CAVE: I've always found that people who oppose what I represent are less of a menace than the people who support what I do. When I was first performing in England, no one was interested, but I didn't find that at all demoralizing. In fact, it gave me a precocious urge to be more objectionable to them. Groups I saw that I hated had more of an impact on me than the groups I like, because they provided a clear example of how not to be. I've never been encouraged to do what I've done, but the fact has always given me strength rather than been a source of paranoia. I get suspicious if I get too much positive feedback.

SPIN: Do you consider yourself a curious person?

CAVE: I'm only interested in the rest of the world in regards to myself and wouldn't describe myself as having a social conscience. I don't spend much time thinking about the Third World, though I do have a certain sympathy toward particular kinds of people and situations. I'm only doing what I do for my own sake, and I'm not interested in helping anybody else unless they affect me on a personal level. It's true that I do make an effort to divorce myself from things I find totally meaningless.

SPIN: How has fame been of use to you?

CAVE: It's been of use in that it's accelerated a specific chain of events, a chain of events I've only been able to recognize in retrospect. It's also shortened my interest in certain things that have been overpopularized. I'll occasionally find in reading articles written about myself that someone with a clear head obviously sat down and analyzed certain series of ideas and arrived at conclusions before they'd occurred to me.

SPIN: In a recent interview you expressed the desire to spend a period of time in isolation, perhaps in a trailer in the desert. How long could you be content under such conditions?

CAVE: I think that to survive in a situation like that, I would need to involve myself in some sort of project, and I really wish that weren't the case. In a way, I feel that *From Her to Eternity* is probably the best record I can possibly make, and I know in the back of my mind that it's time to stop trying to do that sort of thing, that if I continue it will only get embarrassing. I feel that I've run out in a certain way, and that it's time to create a completely new and opposite situation. I've done my dash at being artistic, so maybe it's time not to be artistic. I'm not talking about trading in my medium, but trading in my entire identity for something entirely different and anonymous. Anonymity is the central issue here.

SPIN: How does being drunk change your personality?

CAVE: I become less discriminate. This Jekyll-and-Hyde thing emerges, and I get an unfortunate desire to interact with people of the worst possible kind. Like secretarial types.

SPIN: Do they look appealing to you when you're under the sway of drink, or is it simply a perverse drive?

CAVE: I'm no longer able to differentiate between those two things.

SPIN: What are the qualities in art that you find consistently compelling?

CAVE: Regardless of whether or not I'm attracted to the end result, I like it when an artist bases his work on his own idiosyncrasies, when he follows his basic instincts and personalizes his work to an extreme degree. I believe that some people are born with additional talents beyond those of most people. They have an extra dimension to their personalities.

SPIN: Is the artist in more pain than the average man on the street?

CAVE: I think a lot of people are artists who perhaps should not be artists. There's a lot of bogus work in all the artistic disciplines, and to me it's quite obvious who the responsible parties are. But I don't think you need to be an artist to experience the pain of feeling inadequate or alienated. Those feelings aren't exclusive to artists and there's plenty to go around for everyone.



Andrew Collin

Nick Cave asks a simple question: How many death rockers does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: None. They all sit in the dark.



Laura Levine

A Private Conversation With

Courtesy Tristar Pictures



GENERAL PUBLIC

Interview by Jeff Spurrier

The beat goes on," say countless headlines heralding the arrival of General Public, the new band led by former Beat frontman Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger. While the heading may be catchy, it's not exactly true . . .

When The Beat formed in 1979, the English Two-Tone ska revival was in high gear, as bands like The Specials, Selecter, and Madness were busy driving home the idea that such divergent styles and attitudes as punk, reggae, ska, and rock could all meet harmoniously on the dance floor.

The Two-Tone movement grew out of England's industrial midlands—Coventry and Birmingham, mainly—where white and black working-class youths grew up on the music of West Indian immigrants.

From the beginning, The Beat made a point of confronting the political and social issues of the day, from racism and nuclear arms to madness and conservative politics. The Beat's blend of ska authenticity (thanks to 50-year-old Jamaican saxophonist Saxa), modern melodies, and relevant lyrics earned the band a solid following. Their debut LP *I Just Can't Stop It* stayed on the British charts for nearly six months. Even the banning in 1980 by the BBC of the single "Stand Down Margaret" (an infectious denunciation of the prime minister) did nothing to diffuse their growing popularity.

When The Beat finally came to America in 1980 (as The English Beat, since there already was an L.A. band known as The Beat) the group quickly garnered fans as well as an American record label: IRS.

Two years and three albums later, The Beat appeared to be ruling the punky reggae roost. Madness had gone off in another direction, while both The Specials and Selecter had disbanded. Meanwhile, The Beat's popularity was rising rapidly, leapfrogging from a teenage mod revival in California.

But just as national music magazines were climbing on The Beat bandwagon, seduced by the soulful vocals of the hit single "I Confess," leaders Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger suddenly pulled the plug.

The pair returned home to Birmingham in the summer of 1983 and began working on a new plan with a new name: General Public. They built upon the soul/ska/pop base of The Beat, but ventured in new, harder-edged directions. Helping with the new sound were former members of The Specials (bassist Horace Panter), and Dexy's Midnight Runners (drummer Stoker, and keyboardist Mickey Billingham), as well as ex-Clash guitarist Mick Jones. The result was "All the Rage," an encouraging first album, but without the punch of The Beat.

Still, as the response from American audiences on General Public's recent U.S. tour proves, the band is a genuine crowd-pleaser.

ROGER: If we can avoid talking about The Beat, we're happier.

SPIN: Why are people still fascinated by that group?

WAKELING: Because The Beat is more famous than it ever was when it was going. It's selling more records than ever before.

R: People always love you once you split up, don't they?

W: Oh, not always. I think it was because The Beat split up before they ever fulfilled the promise that a lot of people thought they had. Which I'm glad happened. If there had been many more Beat records, the dream would have shattered, because internally it wasn't nearly as strong as the reputation. Apathy had wrought its terrible havoc so that it had even affected me and Roger. Which was a real shame. But now I love writing songs. It's a real thrill seeing what the other musicians do with a song after I give them a tape and we start playing it as a group. Songwriting is a thrill again.

S: Do you two still work together?

W: Sometimes together, but sometimes separately.

R: We don't write songs in any one way. There must be six or seven techniques and combinations that get used.

W: We both write tunes and sets of lyrics independently of each other. Sometimes, one of us might write the entire song—all the music and all the words, because sometimes that's how a song comes to you. You're sitting there doing nothing, and it just comes out and you're consumed by it for an hour. And at the end of the hour you've got a song. You couldn't tell by listening which of us wrote a song, because after it's been written by one, the other messes with it so much.

Sometimes people try to guess and get it totally wrong. They go by the stereotype—Roger is the black one in the group, so he does the reggae, and Dave is the white one, so he must be the one who likes the rock guitar.

R: And most of the time it's dead the other way around!

W: Roger was a much bigger punk than I ever was.

S: What's "Burning Bright" about?

W: The verses are about watching the TV news and how they always use nice-sounding voices and therefore they anesthetize you to the real horror of what they're actually saying. You can sit there and casually watch burning children in Lebanon. And after about 15 years of it, it doesn't bother you anymore. I started thinking, "Do they do that on purpose?" That friendly polite voice, especially on English news; they under-dramatize it. They make it seem awfully polite while you're watching all this horror going on. And the chorus is an attempt to put some hope in the situation, although it's rare that I feel any real hope when we're faced with a choice of either international solidarity or nuclear Armageddon, for which "Burning Bright" fits either way. In my daydreams it's international solidarity, and in my worst nightmares it's huge mushroom clouds. Both affect me quite strongly.

S: You remarked somewhere that you didn't want to be obvious in your lyrics anymore because it got you banned.

W: Right. We don't want to be expected to be obvious. "Burning Bright" is fairly obvious, as is "General Public," but it's a very fine line between telling people what your opinion is and preaching to them. And certainly, during the experience of The Beat there was this terrifying feeling that sometimes people, because they hear you singing something in a song,

will adopt it entirely as their particular philosophy for the week. And that isn't why I want to write lyrics. I don't expect my shoes to fit everybody, and I don't expect my views to fit them either.

S: You're afraid of that?

W: Yeah, very much, because it can demean the things that we're singing about. We might have joint concerns with people in the audience, but pop is transitory—that's one of the charms of it, that it's fashion-conscious, here today and gone tomorrow. But some of the things we try to sing about are much more important than the foibles of pop. We were really worried about the anti-nuclear stuff we got involved with through The Beat—that as the band got less popular in England, the less fashionable it would be to be involved with the campaign for nuclear disarmament. And that made us almost wish we'd never said anything in the first place! So we thought it would be better to insinuate and suggest, because then people aren't sure what you mean and it forces them to think about what they mean with a situation. Also, because we're in ever-increasing conservative times—not just in governments, but in the media as well—there would be no point in writing a "Stand Down Margaret," because it would never get anywhere near the radio. It would be banned before it would have a chance to be banned. Nobody would hear it, so there's no point in making it.

S: General Public was formed almost by accident. If you had to form a new band, would you do it the same way?

R: Yeah. I don't know if we're isolationists, but we only get along with musicians if they come from Birmingham. We can only work with musicians who come from the same town as us. So we'd probably do exactly the same thing—see who is in town that we like who is not working.

W: But there's no way we'd do that at the moment, because we're quite satisfied with the way things have turned out so far. I have a feeling that General Public might be the last group I'm ever in, and if I wanted to do something else musically, it would be solitary.

S: Weren't there bomb threats and searches going on while you were recording "General Public"?

W: Yeah. It just helped the general sentiment of the song. It made the dub even tougher. We kept getting kicked out of the studio for bomb searches, and every time we came back in the dub got harder and harder. The IRA bomb had gone off at Harrod's department store a few days earlier and they'd been leaving them all over the West End.

S: What is the mood in England now?

W: Apathy. Nobody thinks they're ever going to get a job, and they're probably right. And everybody thinks they're going to die in a nuclear explosion in the next 10 years. Whether they're right about that, I don't know. They probably stand a good chance. Nobody even talks about it much anymore. There's an immense psychic shutdown. When it looked like there was a little bit of hope, people were really angry about it. But as the situation got worse and worse, people just walked away from it. When something nuclear is on television, someone will switch it off and say "Yes, yes, yes, we're all going

to die. No need to remind me." Bit depressing, isn't it? And I think it goes all through Europe. That's not a particularly English phenomenon. When the Cruise missiles came, everybody gave up the ghost and sat down. "There's going to be a nuclear war," they said.

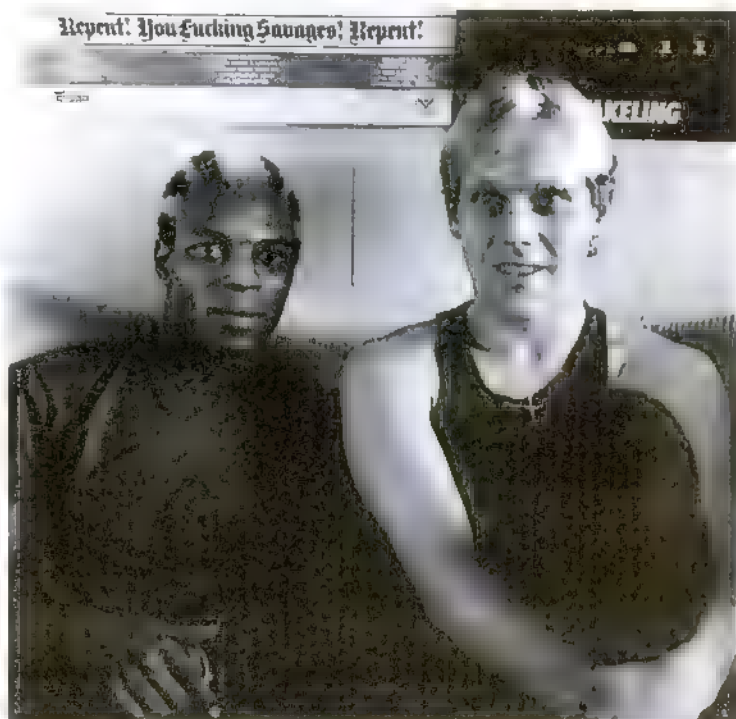
S: You have this line, "The bland leading the blind..."

W: Horace wrote that. It's good, isn't it? I think it has to do with the quality of our leadership at the moment. People are reassured by dull conservatives. They can act strict, at least. They don't say anything, but they act stern. No substance. And the blind aren't ignorant of the situation; they've just turned away from it. They feel dispossessed of any political direction. They feel the people in the government ignore them, so if they ig-

ningham. And people say that Glasgow is just a nightmare. But around London, it's not too bad. Birmingham has 25 percent unemployment. And that's among the white people, so the blacks are closer to 50 percent.

S: Given that situation in your own neighborhood, how do you feel about the various rock benefits for Ethiopia?

W: A lot of people said that to me, that we ought to do a record for Handsworth, not Ethiopia. And a lot of people say that the Ethiopian things are just ego-preening for the artists—and incredibly naive politically, because it's not as if it's a regular famine. It's actually a war of attrition. The people in the north are being starved to death on purpose. Half of the reason they are starving is because they burned the fields for three years to make sure nothing



Ann Summa

nore the government, maybe they'll go away. Unfortunately, they don't. They just get worse. The other sadly insidious thing about conservatism is that whatever takes them a year to do takes 10 to undo. We probably haven't got the time to build another welfare system, another national health system and another free education system.

S: Has suicide increased much in Britain?

W: Yeah, but nobody shoots themselves like they do over here, because there are no guns. There are many suicides amongst the unemployed. And they're mainly from middle-aged men taking drug overdoses because they can't get a job. They're embarrassed because they can't keep the family supported. And there are the young people, but they do it with heroin.

S: Do you base your view on Birmingham? Are things worse there?

W: It is much worse in Birmingham than London. The more north you go, the worse it gets, so Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle are much worse than Bir-

For Ranking Roger (left) and Dave Wakeling, General Public is more than just The Beat, Part II

would grow. They show people starving in Entrea, in the north, but none of the food generated by the records is going there at all. It goes to Marxist re-education camps in the middle of the country. But we were on a record for Ethiopia called "Starvation." They gave the money to Oxfam, who spent the money airlifting the food into the north. And if that will just make the war of attrition go on for another five months or not, I don't know. We felt it was hard to give the political reasons not to go on it, because then you would appear to be callous and uncharitable. Maybe if the food doesn't go to the right place all the time, some of it might. One bag of rice is better than nothing. It's a good record. Roger did a great toast on the 12-inch African version. The group was called Starvation and



included Madness, Specials, Pioneers, ourselves. It was kind of a two-tone Ethiopian record

S: Did Jerry Dammers appear for it?

W: Yeah. He was the commander in chief I like him a lot because it's nice to meet someone who is more neurotic than yourself

S: What do you enjoy most about your job?

R: Freedom

W: Being able to vent your spleen and be paid for it rather than be put into an institution. That's marvelous. It really is a most lucky break, because you start off and you think you're just writing songs, but then you have to dig deeper and deeper into yourself to find out what you really mean. And you learn so much about yourself, usually all the nasty things. And then you have to come to terms with them, reconcile them. And at the same time go to a concert and play the songs and there are 3,000 people smiling and laughing and dancing! It used to strike me odd in The Beat days when we'd play "Mirror in the Bathroom" and everyone would be laughing and waving their arms in the air and I would think "This song is about having a mental breakdown! This is nothing to smile about!" I like being able to find out about myself and be paid. Even the bits that really hurt are okay. I never used to get those opportunities in any other jobs I had. In other jobs, I used to try and find ways not to think about things. I like music because it gets you past words and takes you places you can't explain

S: What's the worst thing about your job?

R: Too many sharks in the business. If

you're not careful with contracts . . . from record companies to tour promoters, you have to watch who you trust.

W: It's the same anywhere; there's easy money and lots of people think that about the pop business. Half the people it attracts are idealistic and fairly creative, and the other half are like, if they weren't in the pop business, they'd be selling heroin. Or sponsoring other people to sell heroin. If something is worth a dollar it's good, and if it's worth \$1.10 it's brilliant. It doesn't matter what it is. While you are trying to be altruistic, if you have one of those types around you it can drive you to distraction. It brings out a very rude side of you. You're always getting people trying to con you. People say, "I can do this for you or that," and after you've been talking to them for five minutes, you realize they're making it up as they go along. And what they actually mean is, "Can I stand by your side and empty your pockets while you're doing something else?" Usually, the more wicked they are, the more they'll keep at you; the more you swear at them, the more they smile and try to be "a real help." That brings out a side of me I don't like, that I'd rather not develop. The only way to get rid of them is to be as vile as they are. And that's the battle they play. They depend on the fact that you're not willing to be as nasty as they are. You get that in everyday life as well, but they take it to a fine art in the pop trade. That's the only bit I dislike. That, and when people book you for two things at the same time. That happens a lot when a record gets hot. But compared to being allowed to record in studios, all that is water off a duck's back.



Linton Kwesi Johnson,
 Prince, Eurythmics,
 posthumous Marvin
 Gaye, R.E.M., Katrina
 and the Waves, Suzanne
 Vega, Tupelo Chain Sex,
 Offs, Sisters of Mercy,
 Fishbone, Kid Creole.

SPINS



Courtesy Island Records

Platter du Jour

Linton Kwesi Johnson

Reggae Greats
 Is and



If Gregory Isaacs is the Cool Ruler of lover's rock, then Linton Kwesi Johnson is the Cool Ruler of dub poetry. His distant and self-assured delivery is in vivid contrast to the white-hot topics of his lyrics. "It was the event of the year/And I wish I had been there/When we run riot all over Brixton"—not your typical Top 40 subject. Yet Johnson succeeds in bridging many cultures with his pleasant arrangements, his deceptive lack of menace, and his scholarly stance.

A London activist, radical journalist and producer, Johnson makes records infrequently—only when the inspiration strikes. His constant collaborator, Dennis (Blackboard) Bovell, leads his backup band and co-produces in a style he has made famous on a series of dub (instrumental) LPs in Britain.

This anthology is a collection of some of LKJ's finest work, although each of his previous albums is a gem in itself, with a minimum of duff tracks. Opening this package, "Reggae Sounds," a slow scorcher, declares "Bass history/Is a hurtin' black story/. . . rhythm of historical yearnin'." "Independent Intavenshan" says thanks-but-no-thanks to those whites who want to fight the blacks' revolution for them. The darkly airy "Street 66" tells of a shubeen, or after-hours private club, that is raided by the police. The shubeens are one way to keep a damper on the powderkeg of racially explosive Britain, but during the occasional raid, the police are often counter-attacked. "Come in and get some licks," taunts the poet. "Di Great Insohreckshan" tells of the Brixton riots in April, 1981, and how LKJ regrets not being part of the action, ". . . when we mash up plenty police van." The song's tempo seems twice as fast as everything else on this side, although Johnson's voice never really changes from its coolly unemotional tone.

Side B begins with "It Noh Funny," a song of praise and explanation about de you' of today, who "Take chance/To live it up a while." "Sonny's Lettah," subtitled "Anti-sus Poem" (the Suss law allowed an officer to arrest someone merely on "suspicion," and was used

primarily for racial harassment; it has been replaced by a law with a new name, but with the same intimidating provisions) is a missive to a mother, telling why Sonny is in jail: his brother Jim had been arbitrarily beaten by the police on "suss" and coming to his defense, Sonny had killed a cop. It's a horrifyingly real peek into the lives of millions of people of color in Britain today.

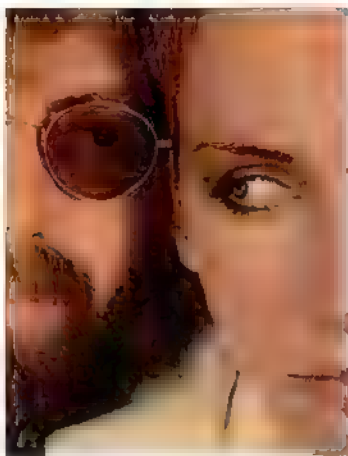
Walter Rodney, the assassinated union leader from Guyana, is the subject of "Reggae Fi Radni." Its unlikely Italian arrangement, complete with mandolin, evokes a '50s movie image of sunset balconies in Naples. "Fite Dem Back" takes matters into its own hands, opening with the mock-Cockney chant "We gonna smash dere brains in/Cuz dey ain't got nuffink in 'em." Then Johnson declares decisively, "Fascists on the attack/Gonna drive dem back," turning the tables, verbally and otherwise, on the Paki-bashers and racist ranters, the bigots and the blackguards. "Making History" rounds out the LP with its incessant, heart-pump organ and siren-like underlining, wailing the warning that, "It is no mystery/We're making history."

My only caveat about the record is Island's inexplicable removal of the bottom sound. (They've done this on all of LKJ's American releases.) Reggae is bass. Whoever is arbitrarily savaging Johnson's work should be forced to stop. For what Linton Kwesi Johnson is doing is nothing less than alerting the downpressors that the time of their overthrow is here. In his hands he displays the golden crown of vindication, held aloft for inspiration. Here's a non-Rasta reggae artist with his own millenarian vision. His music is polished smooth as a pebble on the beach in Negril, but his lyrics are the pearl in the oyster. Get him while you can.

—Roger Steffens

Edited by Rudy Langlais

Linton Kwesi Johnson's album is one of sixteen in the Reggae Series



Eurythmics Be Yourself Tonight RCA

The power and magnitude of Annie Lennox's voice is almost unparalleled among female rock singers. For comparisons, you have legendary soul singers Martha Reeves, Tina Turner and Aretha Franklin, who makes a brilliant cameo appearance on this ambitious new LP.

Dave Stewart, the other half of the Eurythmics, has proved once again to be a versatile and inventive producer, taking full advantage of his partner's amazing voice. He has produced more hook-filled songs, added his own formidable guitar playing and emerged with an album that solidifies the Eurythmics as a force in rock 'n' roll.

Be Yourself Tonight is like an old soul review—it never lets up and is full of surprises. The opening cut (and first single), "Would I Lie to You?" is an onslaught of Kinks-type power chords, Stax horn sections, and frenzied jungle drums with Lennox's vocal riding effortlessly atop this stampede. The strength of the cut is so focused, you fear something's gotta give, glasses gotta shatter.

"There Must Be an Angel (Playing with My Heart)" is the closest thing to a ballad on this highly danceable LP bound to be a summer classic. "Angel . . ." is in the tradition of the best MOR pop, reminiscent of Dusty Springfield and Dionne Warwick. It's sweet but not syrupy, the background voices so otherworldly I can only guess if they are human or synthesized. And when you think you've got it figured, ain't that Stevie Wonder house playing a beautiful harmonic solo evoking his classic break on "Isn't She Lovely?"

A though guest stars can sometimes be as exciting as a supermarket opening that's not the case here. Every appearance is perfectly tied to song and track. When you imagine that Lennox is mimicking Aretha Franklin on "Sisters Are Doing It for Themselves," you then realize that "Good God!" it is Aretha Franklin. That this hard-driving feminist anthem works so wonderfully for both women is a testament to the talent of Lennox. Any lesser singer would have wilted and died in such company.

Sure, you say. She can scream with the best of them, but what else can she do?

I give you "Adrian," a pulsating Euro-pop heartthrobber with the wonderful punk professor himself, *Elvis Costello*, sharing vocals.

On the Eurythmics' last tour, one of the great surprises was Dave Stewart's guitar playing, a talent not particularly featured on the two previous albums. But he's in full force here on songs like "Ball and Chain," a Janis Joplin-like rocker with Tempts background vocals, and "Conditioned Soul," a mod-calypso, playing tasteful, simple riffs with a ripping attack. His guitar work, and the influences of Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, and The Temptations, make this record ambitious and inventive.

It seems that only one or two bands/artists have the power to emerge from the five-year trends that regularly recur in pop music and become a permanent part of the greater scene. The Stones from the first British Invasion, Dylan from '60s protest, Springsteen from early '70s singer/songwriters, The Talking Heads from later-'70s punk/new wave.

With *Be Yourself Tonight*, the Eurythmics have met the challenge of avoiding the Warholian 15 minutes of fame. I suspect we'll be hearing from them for a long, long time.

Elliott Murphy



Prince and the Revolution Around the World in a Day Warner Brothers

My mother phones long-distance and asks me to explain Prince's new album to her because it sure ain't like *Purple Rain*. From out Berkeley way my cantankerous walk-boy Craig keys me up to say he likes the mug because it ain't like *Purple Rain* and besides which it represents the first time since Hendrix a black rock artist has gotten away with incensing his muse at the expense of commercial potential, the way white artists do all the time. My mom tells me the LP reminds him of Sly's "There's A Riot Goin' On" inasmuch as it sees Prince doing what Sly did then, which was to care to move left of musical trends he'd set in motion. Barry in Baltimore relates to me that down his way the brothers and sisters are going for this psychedelic hornswaggie in a big way, where Sharon, a Newark homegirl, says everybody she's talked to says the record ain't shit. Nothing like stirring up a little controversy, is there, Mr. Neilson?

Perhaps it's inevitable, given a career built as much on calculated mindfucking as mindblowing music, that Prince would

choose to follow the best album of his career with the most bewildering, if not the worst. You know something's up as soon as you give the cover a good once-over: A ladder ascends from a swimming pool surrounded by as depressed a group of revelers, including members of Prince's band, as you'll see outside of a Lower East Side afterhours joint.

The inner circles of the vinyl itself continue the Haight Ashbury hallucinogenic motif, as do the first two songs: "Around the World In A Day," and "Paisley Park," both of which recycle the Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour for the '80s with Middle-Eastern instrumentation and escapist lyrics straight out of the Lennon-McCartney dreambook: "The girl on the seesaw is laughing/4 love is the color this place imparts/Admission is easy/just say I believe/and come to this place in your heart/Paisley Park is in your heart." Pretty yucky, right?

Things take a turn for the upswing, however, with the next track, a confessional and churchy tearjerker called "Condition of the Heart," as vulnerable a ballad performance as we've heard from Prince, the smarmy "Beautiful Ones" notwithstanding. As with "When Doves Cry," when Prince sings here of love and loss you feel it was wrenched from personal experience rather than the manufactured feeling all too prevalent in many of his torchy melodramas. Check these lines: "There was a dame from London. Who insisted that he love her/Then she left him 4 a real prince from Arabia/Now isn't that a shame that sometimes money buys U everything and nothing." The two remaining songs on side one, "Raspberry Beret" and "Tambourine," are also larks like the first, with "Raspberry" a typical Prince sex fantasy set to an arrangement reminiscent of the sottier side of *Abbey Road*, and "Tambourine" an allusive ode to either onanism or self seclusion, depending on whether you interpret that tambourine he's talking about staying home and playing with al. alone as either a tambourine or, well, a toy more in the anatomical line of playthings.

Once you've listened in this deep to this whimsical frolic of a record you begin to wonder if what we have here isn't a form of self-parody, like say Prince was out to defuse all his stud swagger and charisma in favor of an image more fey.

The half-hearted and polemical anthem which opens side two, "America" doesn't dispel these notions, just makes you wonder what happened to the juice this boy used to kick out the jams with its political perspective so leaves me in a lurch and worried for his soul, particularly the lines where we're to draw little sister is living in a monkey cage, barely making it on minimum wage, but glad she ain't living in the USSR.

Well, needless to say, all this new-found patriotism and antimaterialism is leading us somewhere, and people I'm here to tell you it's along the path of moral and spiritual salvation. To this end we are given a song titled, appropriately enough, "The Ladder," written by Prince and his Dada. Musically, it reminds me of the old closing theme from *Saturday Night Live* back in the Belushi-Aykroyd days. No joke, chirrupy, syrupy saxophone soloing and all. Lyrically, it's just plain evan-

gelical: "The reward is great 4 those who want to go/A feeling of self-worth will caress u/The size of the whole world will decrease/the love of God's creation will undress u/and time spent alone my friend will cease." (Buy this record and Prince will pray for you, dear friend.)

If you want to know my honest opinion of this nonsense, I'd say it was just another Prince mindgame meant to act as smokescreen between *Purple Rain* and his next killer record; kinda like when the magician pulls the curtains, leaving you in suspense and anticipating his real grand finale.

—Greg Tate

Album Artwork Not Designed at Press Time

R.E.M.

Fables of the Reconstruction
I.R.S.

Athens, Georgia's most peculiar tourist attraction is "The Tree That Owns Itself." The tree, which occupies an eight-foot-square plot, holds the deed for the land on which it stands. Willed into autonomy during the 19th century by its former owner, an eccentric University of Georgia professor, it might have been meant as a satire mocking abolitionism, or as a demonstration of support for that cause. These days, Athens's most popular cultural export is R.E.M. Their new album, *Fables of the Reconstruction*, makes a similar, sometimes equally ambiguous, case for individualism. I'll explain.

I've always admired R.E.M.'s refusal, under pressure, to issue lyric sheets; especially since the songs really need no complement to the way they reach your ears. After everyone had finished wetting their pants over *Murmur*, their first LP, listeners (and paisley-clad fanatics, realized they were something entirely new and exceptional. Here was a pop band big enough to pull together the divergent strains of folk, rock and country, and with the presence to inject the mix with mysticism.

I can't help but think that R.E.M. faces a dilemma: pressured to imitate their previous critical success, based in part on their stubborn refusal to do what is expected, and, on the other hand, to dupe their sound to achieve MOR acceptability. *Fables* lacks the unity of the two previous albums, because many songs here are hesitant ventures into new territory. The untitled funk segue lodged between two tracks on *Reckoning*, their second LP, is extended to an entire song here with "Can't Get There from Here." "Gravity's Pull" has an opening guitar line that is reminiscent of the Gang of Four, and then

the song explores an orchestral tangent, with horns emerging through the wash of instrumentation at the end. All kinds of surprises are buried elsewhere in the mix: On close listening, "The Auctioneer" yields a voice coming through a megaphone, and contains an unprecedented amount of dissonance for this band.

Still, there is plenty here to satisfy the converted "Green Grow the Rushes" sounds like—you guessed it—the Byrds. As usual the lyrics defy literal interpretation. But the beautiful "Good Advice" intrigues because it delivers cynical warnings sung with Stipe's childlike naïveté. R.E.M. balance their experiments with traditionalism: "Old Man Kinsey" is a characterization ripe with romantic Southern imagery, and "Wendell Gee," with banjo embellishments, is the kind of slow, dignified ballad made for pickin' on the front porch.

—Sue Cummings

Marvin Gaye *Dream of a Lifetime* Columbia

A year before his death I interviewed Marvin Gaye in a motel in Silicon Valley, California, and asked, quite timidly, whether in comparison to his earlier work his comeback album, *Midnight Love*, wasn't a touch contrived. That's usually the kind of query that would have sent a wave of bodyguards descending upon me. But Marvin, in his cool, elegant voice, agreed with me. *Midnight Love* was as conventional a pop-R&B album as he could muster. That's not to say it was as clean-cut as a Jeffrey Osborne or James Ingram vehicle. Marvin could never be that straight. But it clearly wasn't as adventurous as *What's Going On* and *Let's Get It On*, or as weird as *In My Lifetime* or *Here, My Dear*.

Well, ladies and gents, Marvin, whose death has been the basis of innumerable jive-ass pop Freudian psychological dissertations, left us something plenty weird to contemplate. If you thought "Let's Get It On" was horny, "You Sure Love to Ball" to the point, and "Sexual Healing" a great sensual concept, Marvin really goes all the way on side one of the posthumous *Dream of a Lifetime*. "Sanctified Pussy" was the original title of the single "Sanctified Lady," and while producers Harvey

Fuqua and Gordon Banks overdub a female chorus shouting "sanctified lady" on the hooks, a careful listening reveals Marvin singing "sanctified pussy" or "sanctified lay" throughout the track.

In "Savage in the Sack," Marvin sets out to let the world know, just in case there were any lingering doubts, that what they say about black men is true. As the backing chorus shouts "It's getting bigger" (are they saying "savage niggers" later in the song?), Marvin instructs a lady friend to "get on your knees to be released." On "Masochistic Beauty," Marvin raps with an English accent such gentle rhymes as, "If you do it right/You get the pipe/If you do it wrong/You get spanked long." Side one's closer, the ballad "It's Madness," has Marvin crying out that the loss of a lover has driven him near insanity. A more sexually explicit or good-naturedly sung (Marvin sounds like he is having a great time) side of music will be hard to find.

Side two is less surprising and sounds older than the songs on the flip side. "How Things Turn Around" is a rather conventional exploration of love that sounds like it might be a *Midnight Love* outtake. "Symphony" and "Life's Opera" hark back to the string-laden sound of *What's Going On*. Lyrically, we are also back in the inspiration of that landmark effort. "Life's Opera," for example, is basically a recitation of the Lord's Prayer. The title cut is an old-fashioned sweet soul record with strings, piano flourishes and a slow, stroll beat. It ends with Marvin crooning, "Thank God for my wonderful life."

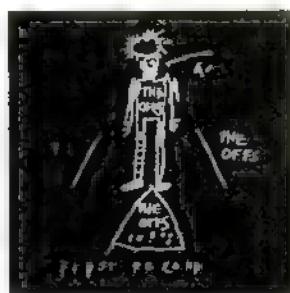
Alright then. What are we to make of *Dream of a Lifetime*? Clearly, side one is a reflection of his sexually troubled, drug-filled last year. Yet Marvin's attitude toward the material is hardly dire. He seems to revel in his outrageousness, and enjoys poking fun at his obsessions, a side of Marvin that doesn't come through in David Ritz's *Divided Soul* biography.

It would have been nice if Columbia had included Marvin's brilliant interpretation of "The Star Spangled Banner" at the 1983 NBA All-Star game. Oh, well. It is sex that sells *Dream of a Lifetime*, sex of a nature that only Prince, among our major musicians, has been so frank about. As a musical force this album will add little to Marvin's legacy. His greatness is already established. But the myth of Marvin Gaye, sexual sophisticate/sexual slave, will surely grow.

—Nelson George



Photo: Fitzgerald



Offs First Record CD Presents

I'm white and I like the Offs because they're white. I judge a band by their color. The Offs play white rock 'n' roll, but it's not bright white, like some rock 'n' roll. The Offs play punky funk and reggae. So do other white bands, but the Offs don't try to pass for black. They sound off white. They play trash.

I judge a record by its cover. The Offs' cover, by superstar artist Jean Michel Basquiat, is black and white—and primitive, just like the band.

A great band with a lousy name is never as good as a lousy band with a great name. "Offs" is a great name: few letters and lots of implications. "Offs" is short for "fuck-offs." The best names tell you immediately what the band is about.

I like the name of the album, *First Record*, which is what it is: raw, unpolished, explosive. On the turntable it sounds like there's a thin film of saliva between the record and the needle. "First Record" is also a great name for the Offs' last record.

The Offs were part of the early San Francisco punk scene in the late '70's. They played all the local clubs and put out some singles, like "Johnny Too Bad"/"62480" and "Everyone's a Bigot"/"O." One of the clubs they played was the Deaf Club. If you're young, hip and deaf, that's where you'd go to pogo. The Deaf Club was started by and for the deaf, the perfect place for punk bands to play. The bands played so loud that deaf people could feel the music. The Offs played the night the club was shut down by the police because it wasn't soundproofed.

The Offs went to New York, played all the local clubs, put out some singles, went nowhere and gave up. Going nowhere and being ahead of your time is a cool, punk thing to do, but that's easy for me to say.

I hope it's true that the Offs are getting back together, because I really dig Don Vini's vocals. They're coarse and scratchy, like a mohair sweater. He sounds

like he just smoked a carton of Gauloises. His voice is nasty and sexy. The songs are minimal and sparse. I like "True Story," "Why Boy" and "Bye Bye Baby" because they're less than three minutes long. I like "Body Hesitation" and "One More Shot" (I love "One More Shot") because I like to dance. I can't get "You Fascinate Me" out of my head, especially the horns. They sound wild and jungle-like. There goes that saxophone again, writhing across the room. Roland Young plays a mean sax, a sax in dark glasses with a cigarette dangling from its lips. Richard Eddon's trumpet sounds the way he played Eddie in *Stranger Than Paradise*—as a well-meaning, cool lost soul.

I don't know exactly where the Offs were coming from, but I wouldn't mind going there. I'm sure it's some hip, out-of-the-way after-hours club with lots of atmosphere and no soundproofing.

—Scott Cohen



Suzanne Vega Suzanne Vega A&M

If all those folkies huddling in coffee houses and church basements are looking to Suzanne Vega to spearhead the new folk revival, they can forget it. Her debut album makes it quite clear that she is not about to be hamstrung by the musical or political restrictions of folkedom.

Vega is best when she is most personal. On "Freeze Tag," she starts with childhood recollections and moves into adult forms of play-acting. "Mariene on the Wall" on the small scale is about a troubled, even masochistic relationship, on the big scale it's about the limits of what one will endure in the name of love. And "Straight Lines" is about a woman who has cut not only her hair, but is shedding excess emotional baggage as well.

Vega can get a bit pretentious, but what singer-songwriter worth a damn doesn't? It's the price you pay for taking risks. "The Queen and the Soldier" is a full-blown folk parable in the tradition of Leonard Cohen or Bob Dylan, concerning the isolation that comes with power. And "Undertow," which refers to the inherent dangers of possessive love, unleashes Vega's prettiest and most metaphorical poetry: "Once I thought only tears could make us free/Salt wearing down to the bone/Like sand against the stone. . ."

Suzanne Vega is a flattering and very substantial introduction.

Gary Kenton



Images from Kenneth

The Third Decade
ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO



Art Ensemble of Chicago
The Third Decade
ECM

The Art Ensemble of Chicago was established in 1964, and since then they have demonstrated a remarkable equilibrium, moving between the call of the ancient and the response of the future. Referring to the kaleidoscopic soundscapes they create as Great Black Music, they have long provided their audience with a study and celebration of black music, ranging from the coast of West Africa and the jungles, to the blues and down-home church music of Southern Negro protestants, to the modern and post-modern jazz tradition and points beyond. While *Third Decade* is not a spectacular LP, it is an important exhibit of the kinds of musical moods the group has created over the years.

"Prayer for Jimbo Kwezi" (an archetypal figure representing the first black officer to serve and die for the Queen of England in a colonial expansion war) features Joseph Jarman playing a synthesizer that initially reminds you of Brian Eno's trance music or a soundtrack for a science fiction movie. There is a section about midpoint where the synthesizer blends in with Roscoe Mitchell's flute to sound just like a Scottish Highlands Regiment requiem, which gracefully transforms into a waltz almost while Famoudou Don Moye executes a delightful soft-shoe shuffle on the drums in the background and Malachi Favors Maghostut makes his bass hum so sweet. If you close your eyes you cannot help but think of some caring mother quietly singing a lullaby for her child.

Mitchell also wrote "The Bell Piece," which opens Side B and starts with Jarman's deep, dark and brooding baritone sax—a sinister growling, gurgling sound bound by some primordial mass, seeking to break free. After some struggle, this force liberates itself and enters into a paradise filled with light and airy wind chimes, bells and childhood memories of ice cream trucks. Lester Bowie's "Zero" is a Latin neo-bop tune which swings throughout, although Bowie's trumpet solo doesn't reflect his humorous side. What it does show is that he can take anything and make it sound oh so personal—the stuff of which great musicianship is made.

Third Decade is a brief collective history of five men who, for more than 20 years, have shared experiences of great power and poignancy.

—David Earl Jackson



Fishbone
Fishbone
Columbia

This new Fishbone record has a great set of titles: "Ugly," "Another Generation," "Party at Ground Zero," "Lyn' Ass Bitch," "V.T.L.O.T.E.D.G.E.," and "2". Now, any record with titles like that is either going to be great or awful. Occasionally, some no-talent wiseass has enough rock 'n' roll spirit to think up a great set of titles. But not very often. Lemme tell ya', it took only about 45 seconds of Fishbone for me to realize they were delivering the goods. It's rock 'n' roll, not rock; the spirits of Little Richard, Chuck Berry and dozens of anonymous honkers and shouters haunt the grooves.

Fishbone charges through the LP's six cuts at breakneck speed. Tunes jump jaggedly from one change to another, flashing a frantic ska beat, squawking horns, growling guitars, nearly a capella harmonies, yelps, squeaks, guffaws and moans. Notes seem to burst out of thin air; voices slide subversive away from an appointed note, constantly straining toward anarchy. You get the feeling that things are barely under control, but make no mistake, Fishbone is tight as a mosquito's ass.

A lotta cuts seem designed to resist commercial airplay. "Ugly" starts off with an oozing, moaning chant, suggesting instant tune-out. Much of "2" merely recites radio-station call letters. No, Fishbone doesn't fit a format, God bless them.

—Randall F. Grass

Album Artwork Not Designed at Press Time

Sisters of Mercy
First and Last and Always
Elektra

The Sisters of Mercy have a sound, a look and an identity. They fit rather neatly into the post-Joy Division school of gothic

rockers. Their name conjures up the requisite empty Catholic imagery. They use a drum machine. Their songs are all dark, funereal—slow or fast, they all have the same relentlessly overcast timbre. Andrew Eldritch's tuneless baritone mumbles and intones portentously from behind a mountain of echo. Sort of like the great and powerful Oz. The guitars never break out of the murk. The lyrics, more angst epics than pop ditties, are humorless, depressing and very self-indulgently romantic.

Now, none of these points is necessarily condemning; some of my best friends are humorless wads of gloom. But that each point follows so predictably from the preceding one indicates a failure of creative ingenuity and the onset of genre music. Being fair, the Sisters of Mercy helped to define the genre in the first place. But without fresh musical or lyrical ideas, the approach runs to cliché. They lack a desperate edge.

They're a talented bunch trapped inside a clichéd strategy. *First and Last and Always* isn't bad, but it sure doesn't reward attentive listening. It's too early in their career for them to become the sum of their clichés. Some air, please.

John Leland



Katrina and the Waves
Katrina and the Waves
Cap to

Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians
Fegmania!
Midnight Music

Strictly from a psychoactive point of view, the Soft Boys were the only legitimate hallucinatory band to come out of the English psychedelic revival of the late '70s and early '80s, led by warped singer and lead guitarist Robyn Hitchcock and his

guitar-wielding pop foil, Kimberly Rew, the band pursued its twisted visions with equal parts Beatles, Byrds, and Syd Barrett. Over snappy pop hooks distorted by his psychotic guitar, Hitchcock spun tales of his fantastic inner world, a land of "floating currents of human eyes/Baking land under creamy skies." The Soft Boys sounded really fucking weird. You didn't have to be on drugs to listen to them. They were drugs.

After the Soft Boys dissolved in 1981, Hitchcock recorded two solo albums, slipped in and out of the persona of "Luther Paisley," and went into bitter temporary retirement, leaving the song "Eaten by Her Own Lunch" to explain his disappearance. Rew cut a few sides with the dB's and reformed his old half-American band, The Waves. Hitchcock's solo career has taken him deeper into his navel; Rew has followed a more conventional folk-pop approach.

The differences between the two Soft Boys surface clearly on these discs. Hitchcock's *Fegmania!* and the major label debut of Katrina and the Waves. Giving Rew's deft tunesmanship and tastefully clever guitar picking their due, it's easy to see where the real talent lies.

Fegmania! whips Katrina on all counts: unpredictably brilliant songs, synapse-bending lyrics, and vigorously inventive guitar. Failure hasn't spoiled Hitchcock. After eight years as a cult figure, he's still as wide-eyed and innocent as ever. His fey, fanciful voice skips earnestly through the spiraling melodies. This is still the music of a man who refuses to grow up, but however dark Hitchcock's paranoid delusions, all of his songs have pretty elements: a Merseybeat harmony, a pristine organ part, or a neatly resolved guitar line. He gets most striking effect by juxtaposing Beauty and the Beast.

"My Wife and My Dead Wife" is about an occult tea for three. In "The Man with the Lightbulb Head," one look at the protagonist arrests the emotional development of his young son. "Insect Mother" is a low-key ballad about having sex with a bug. Baroque organ riffing keeps "Strawberry Mind" from becoming a cliché. On "The Fly," a musical hallucination worthy of Vincent Price, Hitchcock's guitar solo mimics the beating of a fly's wings. The album closes triumphantly with "Heaven," which ramps out with Hitchcock repeating the koan, "You've got arms/You've got legs/And you've got heaven." An inspiringly untinged worldview.

In its defense, the third album by Katrina and the Waves is a bright, sunny dose of pure pop. Rew serves up melodies that would do Ellie Greenwich proud, and Katrina Leskanich gives them full-bodied if somewhat anonymous treatment. Rew's gift is in mixing vintage; on "Going Down to Liverpool," which the Bangles do better, he writes, "Hey now, where you going with that LB40 (the British unemployment form) in your hand," and on the torch ballad, "Cry for Me," he borrows from "The Wind Cries Mary." Throughout, the Waves are bouncy and energetic.

The problem with all this fine stuff is that it's too damn familiar. The dB's and Go-Go's do it with more spunk, and the

Bangles do it with more cool. With a few notable exceptions, like the exuberant "Walking on Sunshine," Rew's hooks are subtle and seductive, the overly rich arrangements turn them to sweet commercial mush. Why does an album loaded with 10 potential AM monsters leave no lasting impression?

—John Leland



**Thelonus Monk, III/
Eric Mercury**
Monk and Merc
Capitol

So what would the old man have said about this? Gotta ask, since his ghost hovers not only over his son, but still looms over the whole scene. Well, once Monk was being interviewed by *down beat* and, after staring at the interviewer for a long time, said, "Where's jazz going? I don't know where it's going. Maybe it's going to hell. You can't make anything go anywhere. It just happens." Having listened to this record a few times, it still isn't clear where Monk's son or this record is going. Is it jazz crossover or funk-dance-soul-mainstream?

Monk and singer Eric Mercury have their problems. Mercury's mellow but edgy voice refreshingly avoids becoming part of the flood of Lionel Richie sound-alikes, but even though he feels the music, he fails to pass along the emotion. The most glaring misdeed, however, is Monk's. One might have thought that he would use this opportunity to attempt to equal his father's virtuosity or at least his respect for virtuosity in others. But Monk,

III doesn't play piano (his old man owned it), he plays drums. Rather, he programs drum rhythms. Why he didn't use acoustic drums is a mystery, given his exposure to such jazz greats as Max Roach and Art Blakey. Still, this is a good record, not a great one, which it could have been. The album is littered with some stirring moments: a lively gospel, African Burundi chorus swelling in powerful rich tones on "Jah Rasta" and the pretty swinging "Thelonii," a not altogether successful but sometimes moving tribute to the giant memory of Thelonius Monk.

—Mojo



Tupelo Chain Sex
Spot the Difference
Selma

Sooner or later, anyone who grew up in a broadly hardcore environment faces the dilemma of what to do when you realize that there's more to life than electric guitar thrash and belching your lungs out. Some have flirted with rockabilly, others with heavy metal, more have merely tattooed their heads and played the same stuff, only a whole lot faster. The strangest solution I ever heard was to team up with a couple of old geezers and try for new wave bebop.

Not that Tupelo Chain Sex were ever exactly hardcore. As far as I can work out, they started out back in the days of L.A.'s Masque as a washboard-and-chaos band with a leaning toward rockabilly (to this day they tour with the likes of the Circle Jerks). The old geezers, however, are very definitely old geezers. Don

"Sugarcane" Harris is possibly the world's greatest R&B fiddler (although that's not a truly enormous field). His achievements stretch from the early '60s instrumental hit "Soul Motion," when he was the Don of Don and Dewey, to a stint with the Mothers of Invention. Stumuk, a venerable but unknown beatnik, works as a carpenter for Frank Zappa, but this doesn't detract from his saxophone.

There are basically two ways to look at what this seemingly ill-assorted bunch produces. One is as rock 'n' roll, the other is as jazz. Most times when rock 'n' rollers are attracted to bop, they get carried away and pretend it's a big costume party. Tom Waits gets a porkpie hat and sunglasses and pretends the '50s and '60s never happened. Joe Jackson acquires a white tux and a saxophone, while Linda Ronstadt needs the whole Nelson Riddle Orchestra to recapture the '40s. Tupelo Chain Sex, on the other hand, approach the thing with the punk ethic that anything is permitted. Your singer—an Englishman called Limey Dave—can sound more like John Lydon than Annie Ross, your lyrics can be gauche and offensive, you can abuse Reagan in a hardcore reworking of "America" from *West Side Story*, and segue into Chicano lounge music; you can even—in a grand album finale titled "Gimmee Five"—create no less than eight careful reproductions of classic bop figures, including Charlie Parker from "Billy's Bounce" and Dizzy Gillespie from "Jumping for Symphony S.d." If all this isn't enough, you can also toss in ska basslines and a cockney-style sing-along about Champion the Wonder Horse.

Only a handful of jazzers have really come to grips with rock music. Perhaps if more had, we might have been spared the abominations of fusion. Charlie Mingus came close in the mid-'60s when he was cutting stuff like "Eat That Chicken" and "Don't Drop That Atom Bomb on Me." Now and again, Sun Ra will pass in close orbit, but on the whole it's the rare jazzperson who appreciates a kinsman with someone like, say, Captain Beefheart. Tupelo Chain Sex have appreciated a whole lot more—primarily that, like it or not, a relationship can exist between Charlie Parker and, say, The Dead Kennedys.

In what has to be the most bizarrely

eclectic album I've heard all year, they have demonstrated this relationship more than adequately. It may be strange, but it holds together totally. Further, they've also proved that, here in the middle of the '80s, anything is possible—particularly if you're willing to stay poor.

—Mick Farren

Album Artwork Not Designed at Press Time

Kid Creole and the Coconuts

*In Praise of Older Women...
and Other Crimes*
Sire

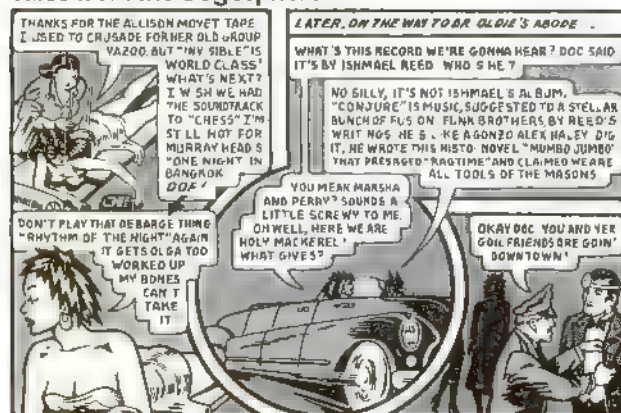
I don't know, but if there had been any kind of career build-up to this album, then it would be regarded as Kid Creole's "Abbey Road." As it is, one still gets the feeling that this is a band waiting for a Broadway show. A show that would piss all over "Dreamgirls." This is Kid Creole's strongest and most balanced outing since "Fresh Fruit in Foreign Places" and shows that on a good day, Kid Creole is the best musical representative of New York.

There are some refinements in their sound from their previous albums (less salsa, more pop-rock), and lead singer Andy Hernandez' jagged presence doesn't quite cut through the way it does on stage, but in no way is this a toned-down or purposely commercial recording. August Darnell's lyrics, sassy and cynical as never before, do the real cutting. The hard-driving "Endicott" ought to be subtitled, "The Freelancer's Reply to a Yuppie"; "Caroline Was a Drop-Out" is in the story-telling vein of previous Darnell numbers; "Annie, I'm Not Your Daddy" is less off-the-wall, angrier; brutal fun. I particularly like the mood of two songs—"Take Me," a tongue-in-cheek rocker musically reminiscent of Paul Simon's "Mother and Child Reunion," and "Patrici'ly Interested," with its creeping crescendo à la Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" behind Hernandez' manic '50s style crooning.

The bases-clearing hit of this session has got to be "Animal Cop," a no-nonsense indictment of trigger happy police guaranteed to be an agent provocateur if it ever gets airplay. Never has this group come on so straight, so blunt, and so timely—revealing once and for all what was always lurking around them, namey, a political conscience as true to the streets of the city as the show-business persona they always presented. Watch out. For Kid Creole.

—Stanley Mises

Tales from the Bogosphere



The Mod Peck and Big Al Pavlov



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Singles

You want 12 inches, we've got it!
(Nothing less than seven inches—guaranteed.)

Column by John Leland

Looking for the perfect beat? Then don't go any further. We got grooves here to move a buffalo's butt. And as proof of the democracy of the dance floor, they come from the most surprising parts of town. The heaviest rock anthem comes from an elder statesblood of hip hop, and the critical rap attack belongs to a 75-percent whiteboy crew. A former minister of mellow funks up, and a veteran angry young man tries a little tenderness. The return of the only band that really matters is no-



Andrew Collin

where near as bad as you feared, while the chain of fools parading as the latest British sensation is nowhere near as visionary as you've been led to believe. The guys who rose to instant stardom complaining about a girl who wouldn't put out, now complain about one who will. All this, plus a whole lotta opinionated shit that barely masquerades as complete sentences.

Bronski Beat: "Why?" (MCA)

The three small-town boys serve up yet another slice of aerobics bounce music that goes for a burn Jane Fonda never heard of. Jimmy's Sylvesterish falsetto, which sometimes ambles listlessly, is all business here: turning militance against homophobia, and confronting bigots with "tell me why?" The Bronskers lay down a slick electrodance beat, and New York locals The Uptown Horns punctuate it with some crisp riffing. This cut glistens with the hip smoothness that made Bronski Beat, along with Sade, the most important new act in dance music.



Harold Siskler

Afrika Bambaataa: "We're Gonna Rock America" (Tommy Boy)

Imagine a funk rock monster with the bottomless bottom of Funkadelic's "One Nation Under a Groove" and the anthemic balls of Edwin Starr's "War," and you still won't come close to fathoming the intoxicating power of Bam's first solo single. It ain't rap; it's hard rock with a metal groove you could drive a truck through. Bam doesn't stray from the utopian message music that is the unifying power of the beat. With a big acid-rock guitar and an even bigger singalong chorus, it hits harder rockwise than Prince and goes into territories Run-D.M.C. has never seen. It's crossover without the softening whitewash.

Death Comet Crew: "At the Marble Bar" (Beggars Banquet import)

Rap is showing its badass face everywhere these days, with Run-D.M.C. busting metal and reggae and Spoonie Gee chilling electronically. Death Comet Crew, featuring Steve Arbright of Dominatrix and New York graffiti artist Rammellzee, jumps on an art rock sound-collage jones. Rammellzee throws down a free-floating Last Poets-type rap over an unpredictable assemblage of effects and found sounds. Movers and shakers have no fear: it has a beat you can dance to. But the lyrics run to images rather than boasts or toasts; beats and breaks to stimulate.

Jazzy Jeff: "King Heroin (Don't Mess with Heroin)" (Jive/Arista)

No relation to the James Brown song of the same (first) name, either in composition or in power. Jazzy Jeff's heart is in the right place, but he hasn't got Brown's influential stature in the community. And despite heroin's persistence in the face of wide-scale public education, as a social tool this tune is bound to be an empty gesture. Be that as it may, as a rock and rap throwdown it delivers the goods in spades. Jeff adroitly mixes song and rap into a propulsive verse/chorus dynamic. If the cut can't hang with the Furious Five's more topical "White Lines (Don't Do It)," it is at least the most potent anti-drug rap since then. And with this groove, Jeff could quote stock-market closings and still move some tails. Glad to see a major label getting behind this.

Graham Parker and the Shot: "Wake Up (Next to You)" (Elektra)

Standing a scant seven inches tall and not packing enough funk to shake an ant's ass, this unassuming little single qualifies as a guilty pleasure I gotta share with somebody. After digging his own grave with his overwrought and unsustainable angry young man image, GP lightens up with some wallpaper AOR soul about adult domestic bliss. Hey, I said it was a guilty pleasure. The hook is that Parker's lifeblood has always been sultry rhythm and blues, which even in the gentle treatment doesn't give up its claws. Call it a soft flame, like the Temptations' "Just My Imagination." It may not be loud, but that backbeat is *right there*. Those who dismiss this as pap don't realize that it's *really cool* pap.

Cheyne: "Call Me Mr. 'Telephone' (Answering Service)" (MCA)

Urban tribalism spins a polyrhythmic groove around the most prominent artifact of our times. Cheyne brings the beat of hip hop and a chukka-chukka rhythm guitar into a mix made in club heaven. A synthesized vibe line takes the track into the technobush. Even with its push-push beat, the chorus is hypnotic in the greatest groove tradition. Cheyne is sexy, pouting, sophisticated, and jazzily syncopated. And when she says she's not Kurtis Blow or Grandmaster Flash, she means it. The song is so simple it almost sounds like a novelty record, but this is '80s dance music that crosses over into all subgenres—and makes them spin.

Don Henley: "All She Wants to Do Is Dance" (Geffen)

When former Eagles start rocking the boards, things have gotten weird. Said mellow fellows symbolized everything (save Nixon and Nam) that made the '70s a drag for growing up in, let alone dancing. While Henley stands guilty of helping to turn our continent into one big California, outside of the big E he's the kind of quirky eccentric that only The Coast could create (cf. Zevon, Newman, Buckingham). All of which is a roundabout way of saying that this mother whomps from the git with punchy electronic drums and a mix that keeps one foot off the ground for a full seven-and-a-half minutes. Henley's post-hedonist vision of apocalypse is twisted.

The Jesus and Mary Chain: "Never Understand" b/w "Suck" & "Ambition" (Blanco y Negro/Warner import)

All rise and hail the Emperor's latest set of threads, the Jesus and Mary Chain, currently the liveliest buzz in Albron. The Chain rings England's chimes with light surf pop tunes that bounce along under a layer of grating guitar noise. Sort of like when the dentist's drill obscures the Muzak; the noise bears no relation to the other elements of the song. The effect is striking, but it has no depth and doesn't go anywhere after the first few seconds. In Hüsker Dü's music, the buzzing guitar and pop hooks enhance one another; Jesus and Mary Chain never puts the two together. Yo, Emp, I hate to tell you, but...

U.T.F.O.: "Lisa Lips" (Select)

Now that the whole world has had its say about the untouchable Roxanne, U.T.F.O., the original jilted johns, have found themselves another fly femme with a very different problem. Lisa spreads her surname all over town. Some guys are never satisfied; they damn her if she does, and damn her if she doesn't. This single trades "Roxanne, Roxanne"'s playfulness for a hardness that more than hints at misogyny, ending on a demon hard-rock riff that bites as tenaciously as the lyrics. It hits one transcendently cool peak when, after a drum fill, the three m.c.'s all say, "damn."

Phil Collins: "Sussudio" (Atlantic)

This side has spent so much time on my turntable that it's starting to get its mail delivered there. From the moment the opening synthesizer hook takes the record into 1999, this is the tightest groove on vinyl. On the bottom, it's all drums that think they're the singer, horn charts that spit and double up on themselves, and the godfather of white soul stuttering about some frame named Sussudio. Despite being one of the hottest dudes on the market, Collins has a tendency to get chilly, but on this bustling single, he keeps the heat on. Take this extended 12 inch over the more cost effective album

Mass Extension: "Happy Feet (T.T.E.D./4th & Broadway)

What we got here is the latest helping of D.C.'s annointed go go, the community funk that won't quit. Unlike most of the air blowing up from the capital, go go is an unpremeditated, unstructured triumph of action over rhetoric. Mass Extension puts its butt where its mouth is. "Happy Feet" invites you to get small and join the fun, shouting along with the loose chant or whacking a conga. And therein lies the key to the music: community involvement. Second-guessers, take note. My bet is that go go never takes over the world, because it's too faceless. Goodfooting though it may be, "Happy Feet" doesn't distinguish itself beyond its genre



The Clash: "This Is England" (Epic/CBS)

They're back, the most messianic punk band to survive the '70s. 'Course, Mick Jones is gone, but fuck it, there's still no one to match them. This single, not exactly calculated to crash the American charts, offers a helping of anthemic Brit power the likes of which we haven't heard in years (Billy Bragg notwithstanding). It's slow and brooding, thundering along on Simonon's dub bass. But it isn't reggae—the band lost some of its edge when it started to take its JA straight. It's definitely a rocker, with a ballsy rhythm-guitar line and a football-chant chorus. Strummer is in peak psychotic/idealist form. Even when he sits back in the melody, he sounds like he's going to explode into wild screams. And of course, he does. Welcome back

Frankie Goes to Hollywood: "Welcome to the Pleasuredome" (Island)

On the dance floor, it don't matter that Frankie has nothing to say. Coherent thought is the province of albums. On dance singles, attitude triumphs where ideas fear to tread, and attitude with a good beat burns down the house. Though neither as powerful as "Two Tribes" nor as intoxicating as "Relax," "Welcome to the Pleasuredome" cuts a solid groove that's both stylish and indomitable. Those who sneer that Trevor Horn represents the sum of Frankie's creative intelligence will be forced to recognize just how moving that intelligence can be: His wall-of-sound production beats this groove into your ears and feet at the same time. It's like a T-shirt you can dance to.

On the goodfoot (opposite left) Red Guitars watch the stars; (opposite top) Afrika Bambaataa on his own; (above) the new, improved Clash: (l to r) Joe Strummer, Vince White and Paul Simonon, (below left) Death Comet Crew (l to r) Shin Shimokawa, Stuart Arbright and Michael Diekmann) play noise you can dance to.



SIDESWIPES:

Doppelganger's "Communication Breakdown" (Manhattan/Capitol) is a slick computer reconstruction of dance rock that needs only a third world ethnic flavoring to be a poor imitation of Adrian Sherwood... **Red Lorry Yellow Lorry** peddles its joy Division-type industrial angst on the gloomy and tuneless "Chance" (Red Rhino import), and redeems all with a subterranean acid guitar... **Loose Ends** sit back in a sweet boy-girl R&B thing on "Hangin' on a String" (MCA)... **Shannon** works her formidable pipes over an equally formidable uberdisco beat on "Do You Wanna Get Away" (Atlantic)... pleasant surprise of the month is **Skipworth & Turner's** pumping 4/4 funk on "Thinking About Your Love" (4th & Broadway/Island)... "She's Wild," by **Hiko Featuring the Great Peso**, is a slow metal rap, akin to Run-D.M.C.'s "You're Blind," that mesmerizes until the obligatory guitar solos muck it up (Tommy Boy)... even more hypnotic is "Be with Me" by **Red Guitars** (Red Rhino import),

a dreamy underground pop song... even a Jellybean Benitez remix can't salvage **Alphaville's** leaden "Jet Set" (Atlantic), a definite disappointment after "Big in Japan"... **November Group** infuses the workmanlike DOR of "Work That Dream" (A&M) with enough mix manipulation to keep its weighty beat moving... Ivan Ivan's fussy remix of **Devo's** "Here to Go" (Warner) can't disguise the spuds' lack of imagination and funkativity... **Roxanne Shante's** "Queen of Rox (Shante Rox On)" (Pop Art) proves her to be more than a one-hit wonder, but less than a visionary rapper... **Lone Justice** waves its roots but adds no juice to its version of Tom Petty's "Ways to Be Wicked" (Geffen)... and **Vicious Pink's** "Fetish" (Manhattan/Capitol) is a kinky, choppy dance track with an equally kinetic electrotake of Rufus Thomas' "Spooky" on its back side

UNDERGROUND

We started it and though others borrow it, rock 'n' roll will always be as American as peanut butter. From sweet soul label Motown to the independent underground Notown, rock is ours for keeps. So this month's subject is America.

Column by Andrea 'Enthal



Start with Chicago's **Naked Raygun** delivering garage punk in chummy boys' voices surrounded by a low, bass-heavy beat and searing, fuzz happy drones of guitar. *Throb Throb* is an appropriately titled album of pounding punk on American themes, headlined by the anti-military chant of "Managua" (in which they instruct you to repeat, "Gee whiz, pretty boys, onward to Managua") "Surf Combat" is a post-Vietnam answer to '60s beach blanket movies, as a psycho vet turns Muscle Beach into Pork Chop Hill with a sizzling summertime collection of napalm and landmines and an engagingly stop-and-start beat. "The San Andreas Fault" is rhymed with "Eat your own weight in salt" in "Only in America," while elsewhere on the LP, a delicate cymbal-tapping hand guides the band through a jazz arrangement of "Libido." Filtering America through a sinister-but-fun sensibility is what *Throb Throb* is about. Dutch East India Trading, 45 Alabama Ave., Island Park, NY 11558, 516-432-3500, offers this and many other underground albums by mail.

Tweaking the cheek of punk with a slow churning swamp of sound, **Flipper** is the band you love to hate for its crawling guitar drones and tuneless, barely tonal ramblings. A semi-anaesthetized tortoise could play faster than these four San Francisco snivelers, who tackle boredom and the meaning of life (though not necessarily in the same song) on their album, *Gone Fishin'*.

"Flipper suffer for their music. Now it's your turn," they've painted on the side of the second- if not third-hand Metro delivery van the band actually uses to tour the U.S.A. And suffer ye will, as Flipper breaks every rule sacred to punks, with tongues firmly planted in cheek. From Bruce Love's taunting, nearly sneered monotone condemning America for its cattle-like acceptance of the military in "Sacrifice," through Ted Falconi's seeping-sludge guitar, Flipper, with a light and punk-loving touch, slabs a well-targeted pile driver into everything the hard corps hold dear. Inventors and reigning kingfish of anti-punk, Flipper is one of America's little bands who could, and did, and probably will continue chug-a-lugging entertaining times out of the most seemingly unlistenable sounds. Subterranean Records offers *Gone Fishin'* for \$6.50 and other Flipper recordings, a T-shirt, and (gasp, what's the underground coming to!) even a live, seven-track video. Its address is 577 Valencia, San Francisco, CA 94110.

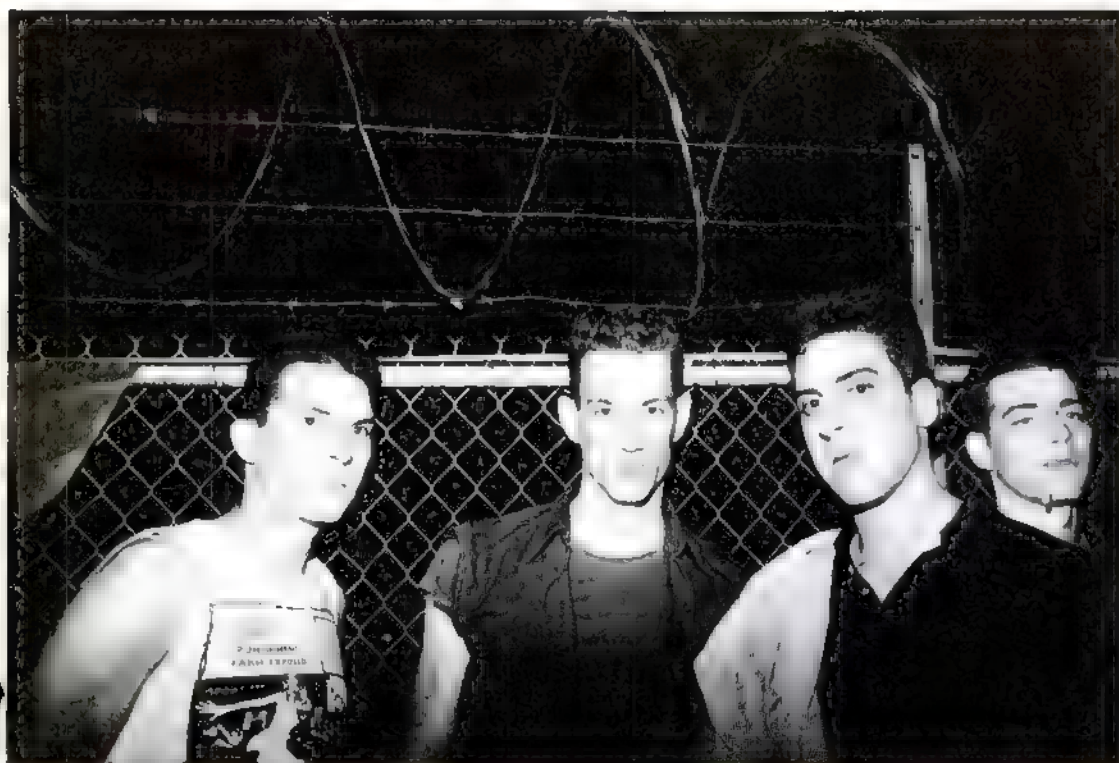
I'm a sucker for the lampooning of sacred cows, which includes a soft spot for any poke at the bull of Jerry Falwell. On "You Know Falwell" he gets that poke when **The Press Gang** unleashes its tightly metal funk on his klean and kristian crusade. Then they tackle the United States: "We'll have Cruise in the jacuzzi/Trident on a truck/We'll have Pershing if we need it. In the john just for good luck/We'll have senators on skateboards/Congressmen in cars/Elvis Presley look-alikes/lots of singles bars... Now you ate your TV dinner/And you don't want to gain weight/Try the Jane Fonda workout," the Gang taunts before reaching the title line, "On sale in the Fifty-first State." The rest of

the story is available from Eddie Singleton at the Admiralty label, 8 Wheeler Dr., Liverpool 31, Merseyside, England.

Daring punk to move its spiky head into the future and puncture its own sacred cows, **Asbestos Rockpile** tackles skin-headed boys and their ultraviolent macho bashings on *Industrial Religion*, a four-track EP of pointed, newly styled punk, complete with a rhythm box chucking disco-hearted repetitions. Choruses of deeply yelped "oi-oi-oi" meet fuzzy, harmonic guitars in a bare bones production where signal primitively overcomes noise on "Skinhead Glory." One side of this seven-inch record plays at 45 RPM, the other at 33. Tucked neatly in the middle of that latter side is "Lydon," a split-gut satirical fantasy on what became of the former rotten Sex Pistol, Johnny. Asbestos Rockpile leader Paul Robert William Clark, in a startlingly accurate nasal impersonation of Rotten/Lydon himself, confesses his total commerciality, complete with a Grateful Dead inspired dinosaur guitar solo. With an upfront surliness learned from the real sneer-master, "Lydon" turns on Sid Vicious, praises disco, and discovers himself interrupted by an echo-laden Top 40 boss jock urging: "Hey kids, get your 7-11 punk-rock star cups now, free with any 12 ounce Slurpee or soft drink: Johnny Rotten, Joe Strummer, Sid Vicious, Jewo Biafra... and Henry Rollins!" Considering this magazine is sold in 7-11s, and colleague Rollins' intimate affection for same, I'm not going to say any more—except that the record's \$3.00 from Paul R. W. Clark at Warpt Records, P.O. Box 1172, Suitland, MD 20746.

The Rhythm Pigs of Clint, Texas, have produced *An American Activity*, a snarling, six-track, seven-inch EP of intense and sophisticated hardcore with deep, bass-thrashing rhythms and a cheer-led rant. The longest tune runs an expansive one minute and thirty-seven seconds, and the shortest is a thrilling twenty-seven seconds. All feature carefully delivered lyrics and sudden, cold endings, as if polished razor blades had abandoned every track after one gleefully targeted slice. From the anthem 'Radio Silence,' where a man living in Idaho "D'nd't have no radio waves. Didn't have to hear Jesus saves," through "The Quest" where the ubiquitous 7-11 pops up again, the Pigs are as furiously speed-crazy as the best garage mash-meisters—but do their thrashing with a clean production that makes it possible to hear every metallic twang and hyperspeed chant they've hidden within. Unclean Records at P.O. Box 725, Sand Springs, OK 74063, is the source of the vinyl, and the porkers themselves may be contacted through P.O. Box 627 Clint, TX 79836.

"When you wish upon a star, always wish for stars and stripes," advises **Living in Texas** on "God Bless America," a pop and upbeat slice of middle Americana set to a dance beat with a breathlessly invigorating vocal delivery. As the record opens, a voice left over from the Bicentennial chants "Revolution." He's answered by a gleefully cracked "Kentucky Fried Chicken!" and "Have a nice day!"

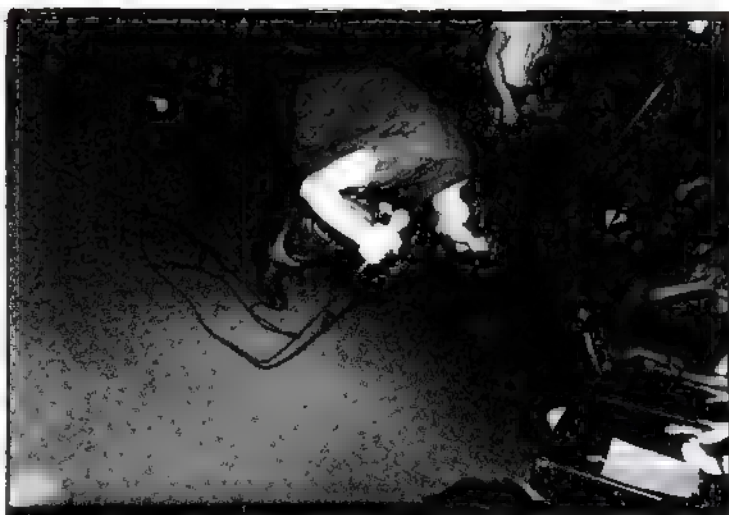


Naked Raygun
Flipper
The Press Gang
Asbestos Rockpyle
The Rhythm Pigs
Living in Texas
Sacred Cowboys
Suicide
Martin Rev
and more fun
in 7-11s

(Opposite page, Suicide (L to R: Martin Rev and Alan Vega) caught in the act, (left) Naked Raygun (L to R: Eric Spicer, Jeff Pezzati, Camill Gonzalez and John Haggerty); (below) a Naked Raygun aerobics class

Western wagons roam the range with Minnie and Mickey Mouse, bits of Broadway musical soundtrack, presidential speeches, and advertising jingles trapped in the mix. Through it all remains the beat, swirling and bouncing with the vibrancy of a junior-high pep rally. Lines like "Yellow clouds of napalm rising" may hint at something more sinister below the surface, but "God Bless America," with its operatic rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" tucked between verses, and American media images sprinkled throughout, is a dose of pure energized joy delivered by a band that, despite its name, is English. Without the opera and dub inserts this record is available as a 12-inch single. It's available in full glory on the album *Living in Texas* from the Chainsaw label. Any American import firm that does business with the British distributors Red Rhino or Cartel can order it for you.

The Sacred Cowboys aren't American either. They're Australian. But their Australia is an altered American state, which they share on *We Love You . . . of course we do*, an album of psychoactive cover versions processed through the 'Boys' deep-and-dirty outback grunge. Among the bands covered are Suicide, a New York City electric duo from the class of 1976-77. As uncompromising as a migraine headache set to a minimalist beat, Suicide made electronic soap operas out of themes excerpted from '50s pop. Martin Rev played relentless rhythm box and Farfisa-inspired keyboards, while Alan Vega crooned like a lost wolf in an echoey cavern. As it suddenly lit on fire, Vega would bark out a scream from some hole in his soul, then set the echoes on "overkill" to pound it into yours. By today's standards only Vega's whoop is radical, but in 1976 the Bee Gees, disco in gen-



eral, and Peter Frampton were The Next Big Thing. Audiences, puzzled by Suicide, spit on the duo, hurled everything at them that was light enough to project without Olympic training, and walked out on synth-pop's founding fathers.

Since the Cowboys aren't a synth band, they don't try to sound like Vega and Rev when they cover the duo's "Rocket U.S.A.," a medley of that tune and Suicide's "Frankie Teardrop" (the most unsettling tale anyone ever gouged into vinyl and attempted to pass off as a pop song). Instead, they revive only the alienation around the barest structures of the tunes, translating Suicide's rhythm box to relentless drum beats and adding Excedrin-headache-number-42-style electric guitar. Garry Gray barks his doomsday warning with a guttural growl, while psychedelized sweeps of something high and fleeting rip through. *We Love You . . . of course we do* is the Sacred Cowboys' tribute to their mostly American roots, which range from traditional Doors, Beatles and Velvet Underground, through folkie Jonathan Richman (with his expletives undeleted look at the love life of "Pablo Picasso") and Suicide, who finally get their due. To each they add their own demented psychedelia with spiraled tension chords in recoil. If your turntable sounds off speed, check again. Above all, do not attempt to adjust the set. Man Made Records of 239 Finders Lane, Melbourne, Australia are in control. Electro-man Martin Rev currently has a solo album of Suicidal instrumentals. Named *Clouds of Glory*, it is available from New Rose Records, 7 Rue Pierre, Sarrazin 75006, Paris, France.

If you would like to know more about these records, send a stamped and self-addressed envelope to: Andrea Enthai, SPIN, 1965 Broadway, NY, NY 10023



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STING II

Sting has a new band and new dreams. In a SPIN exclusive he reflects on where he's going and where he came from.

Article by
Timothy White

Photography by
James Hamilton

60° WEST LONGITUDE, 16°45' NORTH
LATITUDE— "Captain sir, permission to break out the vodka and orange!" whoops the handsome blond helmsman as he hugs the ship's sleek steel wheel, an impish gust suddenly sending some briny spray into his smirking face. "And the gods have spoken!" he asserts, wiping the bracing water away. "Aw, yes, this certainly bears the coal fields of Newcastle!"

We are approximately one hour out of Old Road Bay, two miles off the leeward coast of Montserrat, the proud prow of the 44-foot Queen of Scots sailing yacht sucing the teasing swells at about 8 knots, the rocky island of Redondo rising in the misty middle distance off our port side like a miniature Gibraltar. From this privileged early morning vantage point, sun-mottled Montserrat resembles a cozy merger of Hawaii and Ireland, with its serrated volcanic peaks plunging from their collars of fluffy clouds into dense jungle valleys and sloping, emerald glens.

In the spooky, incorporeal Caribbean, there are few things more dependable than the east-west tradewinds, and as they oust the remaining cloud cover from the path of the blazing sun, the impish pilot loses all sense of composure. Hastily relinquishing the wheel to wiry Captain Ken Armstrong, he lunges for the drinks being served. After downing two of them in as many gulps, he improvises an addled jig on the foredeck.

"I love the boys," Sting sings, "I love the navy! I love my biscuits dipped in gravy!"

The eight passengers scattered amidships explode with laughter. Sting and the others take turns reenacting snippets from the famous "Raging Queen" *Saturday Night Live* seafaring skit, as well as naughty revisions of *H.M.S. Pinatore*. A half hour later—and it's still well before noon—everyone is thoroughly buzzed on Finnish vodka, Monserratian ganja and their own shared bonhomie. On board for the day's sail around the 39-square-mile island are siren-voiced rock singer Sting, aka Gordon Sumner, the slim, bronze and strikingly fit eldest son of Ernest Sumner; Ernie himself, box-jawed, genial to a fault, actress Trudie Styler, the mother of one of Sting's three children and pregnant with another (due in May); shy, spindly-limbed Joe, Sting's nine-year-old boy, three guests and the captain's female first mate.

It is several days after New Year's, and Montserrat has barely recovered from its annual month-long festival, which traditionally culminates

with a three-day revel that includes the Calypso Finals (King Reality aced out defending champion King Hero in the Road March) and the frenetic Last Lap Jump-Up, a dusk 'til dawn parade and street dance held in the rustic port capital of Plymouth (pop. 1,267). Sting and his tribe went largely unnoticed in the happy commotion and those who did recognize him were unfazed.

This day we are in quest of Montserrat's semi-secret natural treasure—its only white sand beach. Because of the island's volcanic origins, the precious few beaches on its western coast are composed of black and silver-gray sand. However, there is one crescent of pink and white coral sand at remote and relatively inaccessible Rendezvous Bay, located near the isle's northern tip. As we press on in our mission, Sting's lively conversation ranges from West Indian politics and the legacy of Bob Marley to Coptic mysticism and Freemasonry, Sting recommending several books that touch on the murky underside of the secret fraternal organization—*God's Banker*, *The Brotherhood* and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.

"They're sometimes a bit difficult to obtain," he admonishes, "perhaps because the Masons and the Catholic Church, whose loyal defenders are legion, aren't particularly thrilled with their presence in bookstores. For myself, I'm always intent on discovering the story behind any story, the structure behind the facade. Separating the nonsense from the few new facts that might ring true is a constant process I just accept. New ideas replicated are sacraments—meaningful rituals that turn nonsense into relative order."

"And new actions are the same way," he says, momentarily shielding his piercing azure eyes from direct solar assault as he accepts another iced screwdriver. "Apart from my family, which means the world to me, I've nothing firm in my life; everything is flexible—increasingly so." He glances down at the foamy water rushing past the bulkhead. "I feel I'm moving at the speed of light, relative to most people. And when you move that fast, reality distorts and things slow down, grow loose and flowing, and become somewhat mystical. That kind of velocity and mood feeds my vast curiosity, my craving to know and to experience and to test."

At this stage in his remarkable passage, the 35-year-old Sting is demanding a dramatic new independence in which to realize his wide-ranging ambitions. The Police, the reggae-laced, buoyantly melodic power-rock





"I have dreams where I create the most unbelievable music, music like Mozart, that I don't consciously have the knowledge to write."

triumvirate that emerged in 1977 from the cacophonous tumult of the British punk upheaval, has not recorded since completing their 1983 album, *Synchronicity*. After touring throughout the following year in support of the record, drummer-founder Stewart Copeland and guitarist Andy Summers went their separate ways for assorted solo projects, among them some film soundtracks (*Rumble Fish* and *2010*, respectively). For Sting's part, he continued with his own meandering screen acting career, spending seven weeks in Mexico City filming what proved to be a brief, fragmentary appearance as the hateful Feyd Rautha in the interminable *Dune*. His next two roles, as Baron von Frankenstein opposite Jennifer Beals in *The Bride* (out this summer) and as a black-marketeer/lover of a French Resistance sympathizer (Meryl Streep) in *Plenty* (due in the fall), are his first lead parts since *Brimstone and Treacle*. That comparatively obscure 1982 movie, for which Sting also wrote several skin-tingling songs, was his first starring role, and he was compellingly convincing as a demonic young drifter who insinuates himself into the household of a luckless London family. Moreover, the fledgling actor and screenwriter is still hopeful that his own script adaptation of the first two books of *Cormenghast*, post-war British novelist Mervyn Peake's allegorical fantasy trilogy, will shortly be produced in England as a teleplay. But with *The Bride* and *Plenty* in the can, his chief concern on this idyllic Caribbean afternoon is a project that promises to postpone any possible reformation of the Police until 1986 at the earliest: his first solo LP.

Rumors mount that his a bum sounds the death knell for one of the most sagacious groups of the last half-decade, but he discounts such talk.

"The Police and my solitary projects are logically very separate," he says. "We haven't broken up, but we've become separated by our own plans for ourselves for the time being. It's nothing more than that."

After spending several months writing the songs for his solo flight, he brought some kith and kin down to this, his ideal workspace and playground, for some dynamic respite. The Police recorded both *Ghost in the Machine* and *Synchronicity* in Montserrat at the notoriously splendid AIR Studios hilltop villa complex, and this trip is Sting's fifth to the mountain getaway. In between water sports, tennis and nighttime carousing in the sleepy island's few clubs, he's been revising lyrics and getting the final arrangements in order for his new material, portions of which—"Children's Crusade," "Set Them Free," "Consider Me Gone," and "Bourbon Street"—date back to a writing spurt Sting had in the summer of 1984.

The boat is coming about and easing into the shoals of the deserted Rendezvous Bay as Sting saunters down into the stateroom below. He pops up again, a red baseball cap over his tousled, straw-colored thatch. Sprawling out on the aft deck, his squarish head propped against the mast, he begins detailing the inspiration for "Children's Crusade," a song for which he has cut an exploratory demo track at AIR's 48-track digital board.

"On the surface, it's a song about human folly and the ravages of war," he says quietly. "Americans look back on the First World War as a kind of glorious adventure, a mechanized breakthrough in defending the world against bullies and tyranny. But in England, it's drummed into all schoolchildren that it was an utter disaster, a grotesquely tragic waste of an entire generation of young men. Tens of thousands of them were continually sent over the top on the Western Front to be riddled and dismembered a few feet later by a hail of machine gun bullets. The lemmings-styled charges were all for naught, gaining not one inch of ground. British World War I memorials contain endless, horrifying lists of the dead. That war became a symbol of the end of the invincibility of the British Empire and shattered the people's faith in the wisdom of their generals and politicians."

"The actual Children's Crusade was a mythic army of kids sent to the Holy Land to convert the Saracens, but the truth is that it was a corrupt plot hatched by monks in the 11th Century. They rounded up street ur-

chins on the pretense of recruiting them for some pious purpose—and then they shipped the helpless children to North Africa. Those that survived the journey in spite of starvation and shipwrecks were sold as white slaves. I tell you, history is, in part, a series of madmen deluding people into parting with their children for loathsome and tragic schemes."

The intense mood lifts when Trudie gives the call for lunch, and she breaks out a mighty Tupperware bowl of her superbly gooey, *al dente* macaroni salad while Sting slips into the galley, re-emerging with a basket brimming with cold roast chicken he'd prepared the previous evening. As Sting and the witty Trudie josh each other about their "appalling domesticity," Ernie Sumner chats about his brood of two boys and two girls, who had a strict Roman Catholic upbringing in the north England city of Newcastle. Located on the Tyne River, it was once a thriving center for coal mining, shipbuilding and heavy industry, but the port never recovered from a crippling recession it suffered in the '30s.

"My wife Audrey and I, we raised them well enough, tried to give them a bit of good advice," he says with pride. "We were never poor, but life in Newcastle was sometimes difficult. I delivered milk, and then I later got to where I took over the dairy business myself. I'm retired now, and Gordon's brother Philip, he runs the dairy, and also has a nightclub in town." Ernie's face is abruptly creased with a crooked grin. "Hey now," he calls to "Gordon," indicating the boat with a sweeping gesture, "when you were a lad I told you to get yourself on a ship and see the world, didn't I?"

Sting nods, blushing, and chuckles as he recalls aloud applying for a seaman's card when he was 17. He had landed a job with the Ronnie Pierson Trio, a shipboard dance band contracted to Princess Cruises, playing bass with the group on the summer circuit in the Mediterranean.

After lunch, there is a brief siesta, the boat swaying in time to a radio tuned to the calypso of Radio Antilles. The steel pan and percolating trumpets suddenly segue into the sinewy tick-tock of "Every Breath You Take."

"Goodness," Trudie quips, "that sounds like Daddy working!"

With that, the radio is switched off and we pile into the rubber Zodiac motor raft tethered to the end of the boat for the short trip to the beach. The broad ribbon of sand is as soft as it is ultra-fine, and the sheer, orange clay cliffs looming over it rise at least 30 feet to a plateau of gnarled scrub forest. Sting remarks that the stark beauty of the spot's extreme isolation would be appropriate for a cinema remake of Robinson Crusoe. When he returns to the theme of "Children's Crusade," he says:

"I remember how, around 1980, I got catatonically depressed about the future, about the future for my young son in a world cursed with the shadow of what seemed ceaseless wars and imminent nuclear catastrophe. That shadow is still there, but now I feel better, perhaps because I'm on the offensive in terms of sounding an alarm in my music or at least daring to consider the implications out loud, hoping people are listening. 'Children's Crusade' is an appeal to reason."

Joe runs up to snugly whisper something in his dad's ear, a recurring tableau during the course of the sail. Sting cocks his head, takes in the confidence and then pulls the skinny boy close to kiss him on the cheek.

"Joseph is a bundle of secrets," he says, cupping his hands over the boy's ears. "He doesn't speak to anyone but his dear old dad when he's out in public, and even then he does it under his breath. I don't want him to hear this but I will reveal nothing of his words. Not even upon pain of torture most grievous!" His son begins to giggle, which Sting encourages with a whirl of rib tickling, and then Joe breaks free of his grasp and spins off toward Trudie. She sits some 50 yards away, gazing out at the glistening water, lost in her thoughts. On the boat she'd chatted about her love of acting, her work with the Royal Shakespearean Company and the play she'd happily completed just in time to concentrate on her pregnancy.



"I want something more open-ended, flexible and dangerous than a Springsteen or Prince show."

"You know," says Sting, his tone placid, "I sometimes think of all the turns I've taken. I was the Northumberland champion in the 100- and 200-meter sprints when I was in private school, which meant that I was ranked No. 3 in England in my age group. But having reached that point, I gave up. I decided there was no gain in being part of the pyramid. I was to be the best at something else."

"All my life, the process of forgetting myself and clearing my mind has gone against every conditioning I went through as a boy. I was conditioned to plan, to plot, to scheme, to worry. That was the only route out of the working-class world I was raised in, a Catholic boy in a Protestant universe where the class structure blocks your dreams rather than assists them. If you're not wealthy or part of the aristocracy, rock 'n' roll is one possible way out of the suffocating British system."

"I just finished reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and I wept at the end of the book because it had a heart and an eloquent genius to it that seemed beyond human ingenuity. It was about how close dreams and long-term realities can be. As it charts the strivings of a family over a century, predictions and visions come true, for better or worse, but you see them taking shape from the start. It takes enormous courage and belief to meet your destiny in life; you can see it so closely, and yet you still have to struggle toward it. Once you're aware of its existence, it's more a hard-fought objective than a preordained fact. That's why many people miss their calling, their destiny, or allow themselves to get beaten down on the road to finding it. Strange how things can be magical on the one hand, and heartbreaking on the other. We all begin with such enormous promise!"

"I was invited to witness a psychic metal-bending experiment in September 1981, supervised by a professor in the physics department at London University. I saw the young people being tested bend thick strips of metal and then bend them back again over the course of an hour or so. And the people conducting the research were scientists, not mystics. At the time, wit-

nessing those experiments was more exciting for me than rock 'n' roll."

During a previous interview in Manhattan in 1984, Sting had made it clear that he was transfixed by the possible metaphysical import of those experiments and was quite immersed in inquiries into the occult. This afternoon, romping and reflecting on this secluded beach, he seems a far more sober presence. What's changed, or changed him?

"I have three children, and another on the way from a woman dear to me," he says. "That kind of thing pulls you down from the clouds, I suppose. You know, all those kids in those experiments are losing their psychic powers as they conform to society's notions of normality, getting jobs, girlfriends, mortgages. I think that says something about society's innate power to discourage specialties. I want to prevent that from happening to those I care about and want to see flourish."

He looks down the beach at Joe, who's constructing a sand castle with Trudie. "I would die for that little guy," he says after a long silence, "but I would much rather live for him."

It's just after sunset when we complete our circumnavigation of Montserrat and put in again at Old Road Bluff. Behind us, heat lightning is flashing through the roiled blue and purple clouds above Antigua, visible 27 miles to the northeast. Everyone is smarting with healthy sunburns and professing a grateful weariness from the sail, vowing to head off for extended naps—except Sting. After returning to his rented villa across from the Vue Point Hotel (whose seaside cluster of impeccably cottages comprises one of only two worthy public lodgings on the island), he heads down the road to the AIR Studios complex to add guest vocals to "Money for Nothing," a track on Dire Straits' new *Brothers in Arms* LP.

Later that evening, everyone, including Sting and most of Dire Straits and its support staff, congregates at the Village Place, a secluded rum-bar-cum-eatery located in the hills above the tiny village of Salem. Beneath a sagging network of Christmas lights, the band members and assorted villagers are sipping Carib Lager while engrossed in one of several games of backgammon taking place on the patio or placing small bets on the solemn billiards match between two dreadlocked locals in the adjacent shed. But the real action is at the long bar in the low-ceilinged main shack, where dread barkeep Danny Allen is cooking up batches of Mix-Up (a blend

of Irish sea moss, brandy and Guinness stout said to be an aphrodisiac) and the viciously potent Volcano (four kinds of rum, grenadine, pineapple juice, orange juice and Montserrat lime juice). Jimmy Buffett has said that he named his 1979 *Volcano* album for Montserrat's active lava boiler, Galway's Soufrière, but the young bloods at the bar wink and assure you that it was named for the libation that Buffett and James Taylor downed endlessly on the premises and in the now closed Agouti in Plymouth. Whatever the case, there is general agreement that it was Elton John who made the joint the nocturnal watering hole of choice for AIR denizens when he adopted it during the making of *Too Low for Zero*.

Midnight comes and goes, the place grows noisier and more raucous. The Knopfler brothers arrive and wade into the general fray. Steel Pulse pulsates from crisp, basso speakers hung overhead while the racially mixed clientele joke, jawbone and flirt with each other, occasionally glancing over at the James Bond movie on the TV over the ancient refrigerator. But for slave rebellions like the legendary one staged on St. Patrick's Day, 1768, and the equally famed Fox Riot of 1889 in the neighboring village of Frith (wherein an angry mob held off police attempting to arrest the Fox family for illegal distillation of rum), the tun-loving citizenry of the island is surprisingly devoid of the racial friction that afflicts so much of the West Indies. When the sound system erupts with "Hot, Hot, Hot," a recent single by local soca star Arrow that was a huge hit in England, the crowd cheers in unison.

"I've got a theory about the Caribbean recording studios and why people come here," says Sting the next afternoon, barefoot in chic swim trunks and souvenir polo shirt, as he takes a poolside table at the Vue Point Hotel for a late lunch. "Wanna hear it?"

A coquettish teenage waitress arrives, encouraging him to try local delicacies like goatwater stew, spicy rice and peas (as kidney beans are known in the Indies) and mountain chicken (frog's legs). He opts instead for a club sandwich on rye toast and Lime Smash, the native soda pop, and offers his hypothesis.

"No European or American rock group comes to the Caribbean to record their first record," he begins, "because the costs are prohibitive and it'd be pretty silly, since it's really urban music that we all make. When you initially start touring, and you achieve any kind of popular grassroots response, you've primarily toured cities, industrial and depressive areas, in horrible clubs and hails with awful dressing rooms.

"Then you record the first album, which for the Police, of course, was the *Outlandos d'Amour* thing in 1978, and you do it in a cruddy, funky studio with egg cartons on the walls. You make your second album in more or less the same place on a shoestring budget [*Regatta de Blanc* was cut in London's humble 16-track Surrey Sound Studios for a scant \$6,000], after touring again on the same dreary trail. We kept costs down on our early American tour by loading our own equipment into vans and station wagons, because it usually takes two albums before you see any money.

"And then the bucks started coming in," he says with a wide grin as his food is set before him. "And we began to think about a state-of-the-technology studio in some smart locale. Then, more bucks came in, and we said," (here his dusky voice cracks in a gleeful yelp), "Hey, why don't we go and record in the Caribbean!"

"There are a variety of choices open to you: You can go to Nassau, to Barbados, to Jamaica, or come here. And it's a way of saying you've made it; it's a reward. You are ensconced in a tropical paradise, allowed to feel your new wealth and its attendant power. Following my awful separation from my wife [actress Frances Tomelty] in the early '80s, I went to Jamaica to escape and I stayed at Golden Eye, the old Ian Fleming house in Oracabessa that Chris Blackwell of Island owns. While I was there, I sat at Fleming's old wooden desk overlooking the ocean, the one at which he wrote all his James Bond books, and I wrote 'Every Breath You Take,' 'King of Pain,' 'Wrapped Around Your Finger,' all these neat songs. And that was also the first time I



"Following my awful separation from my wife, I went to Jamaica to escape and stayed at Golden Eye, where Ian Fleming wrote all his James Bond books, and I wrote 'Every Breath You Take' and 'Wrapped Around Your Finger.' And tried sensimilla."

tried sensimilla. I brought those songs to Montserrat and we cut *Synchronicity*.

"I'm not much of a tourist; I've seen most of the world anyway, so I don't want to go out and find more new places. I bring my family here because I know what I can expect without any worries. I know I'm gonna be able to learn to windsurf, water-ski, all the middle-class stuff I never got the chance to do when I was a kid. For the time being, this kind of environment is also good for me creatively, but I think it would be a mistake for the Police to do another album in this kind of setting. I think it's best," he concludes, biting into his savory double-decker sandwich, "that we eventually get back to the square of our roots. Me, I'm also planning new ones."

Approximately one week later, a tanned and high-spirited Sting is roaming the wintry streets of New York City, searching for the right combination of musicians to help him bring his own work in-progress to fruition. Booking time at the SIR rehearsal studios on Manhattan's West Side, he screens a host of the city's best axemen, and he is open and unabashed ("I couldn't have done it otherwise") in acknowledging the debt he owes to Vic Garbarini, former executive editor of *Musician* magazine, who played a key role in lining up the nation's top jazz-based instrumentalists.

"Sting knew I was in close touch with this network of players," says Garbarini, "and as far back as last October, when I was staying with Sting in his house in England, he had said to me, 'Maybe I should just give you a checkbook and let you hire me a band.' I thought he was kidding until he called me in December of '84

and said, 'Do you want a job? I want to work with highly skilled jazz musicians to ensure the quality of the project, and the rest will take care of itself.'

"I said to him, 'But you don't want the older jazzmen who grew up playing bebop. What you want are the young ones who were raised on jazz, fusion and funk and are closet rock fans.' In other words, a more assimilated crew but still with a contemporary edge. I suggested he sign up Branford [Marsalis] sight unseen, because I knew Branford, and his sax has got that Wayne Shorter/Coltrane sensibility but also his own very contemporary funk-influenced sound. Sting agreed."

Next Garbarini drew up a laundry list of the cream-of-the-session crop, as well as the best and brightest new innovators. "Overnight, I put together workshop-type auditions with the full spectrum, from the avant garde end of James Blood Lulmer sidemen to the neo-classical guys. By the second day, we had most of the group." Which was Marsalis, drummer Omar Hakim, late of Weather Report, and Miles Davis alumnus Darryl Jones on bass. The latter two were pressed to set aside their own evolving career schedules to clear the decks for seven weeks of recording at Eddie Grant's Blue Wave Studios in Barbados, followed by a solid year of global concert chores. Keyboardist Kenny Kirkland came aboard at the end of the week and vocalists Dollette McDonald and Janice Pennington were added. Everybody scattered for a spell to wrap up any lingering commitments and then regrouped for a mere seven days of serious rehearsals before presenting a trio of sneak preview shows on February 25, 26 and 27 at the jammed Ritz club in lower Manhattan.

"I set it up that way to create tension, create a galvanizing element," Sting explains. "It's no good saying, 'Well, let's do a rehearsal and then we'll have a gig in August.' That wouldn't have been right for me; I would have been bored. Having that gig to work for in a very short time meant we really had to work hard. I wanted to discipline them as far as learning the songs, and then let them play their asses off.

"Much black jazz music these days is played to white, middle-class audiences in a sort of conservatory environment. When you go to see Wynton Marsalis play, you might as well be going to hear chamber music. Many of them are not used to steamy, sweaty rock clubs where the stage is bouncing up and down and the kids are going berserk. So I looked 'round on the opening night at the Ritz and I was nervous, but they were all frightened.

"And most of them had never even seen me perform live! During rehearsals I'd been very low-key and matter-of-fact so they weren't prepared for the lunatic who arrived on Monday. The best music was played on Wednesday night, but most of the raw terror and joy was on Monday."

Decked out in baggy dark trousers and a bright yellow jacket over a white T-shirt, Sting bobbed and leapt around the stage, swinging his cream-colored Telecaster with a sure vengeance as he led the game ensemble through the anthemic "The Children's Crusade"; "Bourbon Street," a cinematic narrative about an immortal nightstalker inspired by novelist Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*; and "Working the Black Seam," a chillingly foreboding parable that used the recent protracted coal miners strike in England as a metaphor for willful self-destructiveness; in that case, the pig-headed miners pitted against Margaret Thatcher's insensitive Tory resolve.

The immaculate harmonics of Andy Summers' deft chordings and the reverberant, timbale-redolent grandeur of Stewart Copeland's reggae-rock percussion had been replaced by an awesomely interwoven tapestry of reflex virtuosity. The delicacy of Marsalis' affecting soprano and tenor sax solos offered an airy counterpoint to Jones' bold, deep-diving bass lines and Hakim's exultantly propulsive stick and cymbal flair. Kirkland's keyboard parried and thrusted in a seductive mating dance with the women's vivid, vivacious backup singing, and lent the songs intoxicating color. When Sting did solo guitar and voice versions of "Roxanne" and "Message in a Bottle," the full house sang along with

gusto. And when the band roared through rearranged versions of "Shadows in the Rain," "Driven to Tears," and "I Burn for You" from the *Brimstone and Treacle* soundtrack, the crowd seemed jolted by the fresh contours and fury in Sting's climbing vocals. Sting even inserted a couple of sassy Freddie King and Little Willie John blues standards for cocky good measure. With a deafening sendoff from the faithful, the man and his shock troops were well along on the road to Barbados.

Look at this place!" urges Eddie Grant, his thick drape of dreadlocks reaching halfway down his broad back, as he treks through the converted stable in which are installed a spectacular 48-track digital studio and a suite of business offices. Striding out into the bone-dry midday heat, the blazing sun making his nylon red and white tracksuit gleam fiercely, Grant moves past the bubbling fountain in the courtyard of his renovated plantation and onto the front porch of the main house. The long piazza, constructed, like the rest of the compound, of white marble, terra-cotta and bleached coral brick, overlooks a swimming pool and terraced gardens, delineated by an elegant balustrade. Beyond this is a vast plain densely planted with sugarcane, a deep green and impenetrable sea of ripening stalks.

"Who could believe," he says evenly, his chest swelling, "that a boy named Edmond Montague Grant from Guyana, the son of a man who sold automobile parts, would one day possess Bayley's plantation? In the 1880s, it was the virtual kingdom of a lordly white landowner and slave master—one of the biggest in the history of Barbados.

"In fact," notes the 37-year-old singer/songwriter/producer, "this plantation was the site of one of the bloodiest slave revolts in the Caribbean." He indicates the high ground on which we stand. "Right here is where the renegades set the fires that signalled the start of the rebellion."

In the warm glow of midday, the vista seems calm enough, too breathstealing in its elemental beauty to inspire anything but awed appreciation. But when the hazy dusk settles in, it isn't difficult to imagine the desperate drama unfolding on that Easter Sunday in April, 1816, when the end of the Napoleonic Wars led to a slump in the sugar market and caused the brutal Bajan plantocracy to drive the slaves mercilessly to raise production. Promptly at 8 P.M. that Easter tide, when the slaves knew the governor would be off the island and most of the whites away in the capital city of Bridgetown, the plot was sprung. Bussa, the ranger (elite managerial slave) on the Bayley's grounds, gave the word to ignite the cornstalk and trash piles that would act as signal flares. Bussa broke into the stables that now house Grant's studio and made off with horses, arms and ammunition. Within hours, the insurrection spread to 70 of the largest estates and a season of depravity took hold. By the time the militia put down the revolt, one white civilian, one black soldier and 50 slaves had perished in the fighting, with 70 more slaves being swiftly executed in the fields. After a cynical trial in Bridgetown, 132 surviving slaves were deported and 144 more put to death, their decapitated torsos hung from trees around the island, their heads placed on posts and railings around Bayley's and surrounding farms.

But the grisly displays of the carnage did not diminish the thralldom's hunger for freedom, and they won it in the 1830s. That in the month of April more than a century and a half later, the erstwhile Bayley's plantation should host the creation of a musical event by the once and future star of one of the planet's biggest rock bands is no less edifying to its current landlord.

"Sting called me on a Saturday afternoon, I believe, saying he wanted to see the place. He told me he'd considered and rejected other studios and wanted to fly down immediately. When he walked in, he said, 'Yup. This is it. I'll see you soon.' And he did. We've struck up a great friendship.

"I have to hand it to him, because it was a great step for him, a tremendous show of bravery to redefine himself outside of the institution that is the Police. He



"I was conditioned to plan, to plot, to scheme, to worry. That was the only route out of the working class world I was raised in. Rock 'n' roll is one possible way out of the suffocating British system."

squeezed his balls and decided to go for broke, which is the kind of gamble I understand. 'Love is the 7th Wave' is a song I particularly like, because it showed what a good listener he can be to the musical life around him. There's a belief in Barbados that the seventh wave is always the best and bluest wave for any swimmer, sailor, surfer. Hearing that song and the rest of the tracks in their various stages, I'm thinking he's going to see the bum at Number One.

"I was eager to directly participate in some way, so I played conga on 'Consider Me Gone,' and it was a treat. The man has courage, and a respectable game of tennis. Far as I am concerned, Sting is a regular Bajan now."

"Eddie is a motivated person who has brought about a lot without wasted effort," says Sting. "He's a rather retiring and reclusive fellow, and he only leaves the grounds to play squash with the Bajan champions at the Barbados Squash Club. Even when he's on the premises, he and his wife and family keep to themselves a great deal." He shrugs. "It's funny, really, how at ease he is holed up in his hideaway, because we were just the opposite, all catching a powerfully strong dose of island fever at the six-week mark, because there's only so much to do in Barbados when you're not working. We must have watched a video cassette of *Spinal Tap* at least 15 times, until all of us had memorized every bloody line! Then we began to roll around on the ground, laughing hysterically at each other's remarks—whether they were jokes or not.

"Our demented state was further aggravated by the periodic power surges in the island's power supply, which would pay havoc with the precision of the digital settings for each of the tracks, all of which must be perfectly preserved on floppy disks so they can be re-aligned later in a different studio for the remixing. We

were driven batty by the tendency of the vocals to drop off at odd intervals until we discovered the power surges were the cause.

"There was genuine delight in the way we've all stretched ourselves in the studio, and I expect it to continue on the road. I want something more open-ended, flexible and dangerous than a Springsteen or Prince show, although I like both. I'm working with musicians who are light-years ahead of me as players, and all they lack in this case is a unifying conceptual sense, which I provide. I've had to become more proficient as a musician, and they've had to deal with strict songs that have their own integrity. This album was written before they came together, so it'd be interesting to see what an album for the band would sound like. I'd like to try it.

"These guys are not sidemen, and when we start the tour we're going to sweep away all who've gone before us, devastating them. No one can blow us off as musicians, performers or anything else. We're gonna fucking wipe the table clean, and that's an open challenge."

At the end of the seventh week, it was time to put all such notions on the back burner and race to New York City to play the unmixed final tapes for the brass at A&M Records. Meeting with an enthusiastic response, Sting decided to linger in the city for a few days to unwind and collect his thoughts before taking the masters to Le Studio in the woods of Quebec for a final mix down.

Having dinner at the de rigueur Cafe Luxembourg on West 70th Street, he devoured a lamb entrée, knocked back a few rounds of vodka and grapefruit juice and ogled the waitresses—"There's something about girls in black uniforms and black stockings that drives me absolutely crazy." His immediate desires sated, he ordered cappuccino and finally disclosed the title of the album: *The Dream of The Blue Turtles*.

Huh? "Okay," he smirks. "Let me explain. During the week of rehearsals for the Ritz shows, I had a dream that I was back home in Hampshire, looking out the window into this big walled-in garden I have out back with its very neat flower bed and foliage. Suddenly, out of a hole in the wall came these large, macho, aggressive and quite drunk blue turtles. They started doing backflips and other acrobatics, in the process utterly destroying my garden."

He halts momentarily, noting the amazement on the face of his guests, and grins hugely, the thick smile-creases etched above the hollows of his deeply accentuated cheeks. In the past, Sting always seemed slightly forbidding up close, his high forehead, severe arching eyebrows and long puggish nose creating an initial impression of parous arrogance that a cruelly-set mouth often confirmed.

With slight age lines in evidence on his smooth face, he appears much humbler and appealingly seasoned, the formerly taut lips markedly relaxed, the defiant glare of bygone days no longer in evidence. Once, his image was that of a pompous scamp guarding a venal secret. Now he strikes one as a serious artist, grateful for a genuine glimpse at personal satisfaction.

"You must give me a little space here," he pleads self mockingly, and resumes his recollection. "So anyway, I'm somehow enjoying this curious spectacle, and the dream is so strong I remembered it perfectly when I woke up, to the point where it became part of my juggernaut to complete this record. Having undergone Jungian analysis, I've gotten proficient at interpreting my own dreams. Carl Jung having believed that there're doors into the innermost parts of your psyche. For me, the turtles are symbols of the sub-conscious, living under the sea, full of unrealized potential, very Jungian in their meaning."

The late Swiss psychologist, the man who theorized about the existence of a collective unconsciousness, and who coined the word "synchronicity" to describe the mystical roots of coincidence, did not regard dreams as random rehashes of the day's events and experi-



"I think it's best that the Police must get back to the squalor of our roots. Me, I'm also planting new ones."

ences. Jung wrote that dreams are psychic opportunities, "opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego consciousness. . . . Out of these all-uniting depths arises the dream, be it ever so childish, grotesque or immoral."

"I have dreams where I create the most unbelievable music, music like Mozart, that I don't consciously have the knowledge to write," says Sting. "It's there, I'm writing it, and it's real. So with the album I wanted to destroy a lot of preconceptions and expectations, and do something unsettlingly different. These blue turtles, these musicians, were gonna help me." He chuckles contentedly. "And they did."

And what of The Police? Few rock acts are so celebrated for their flamboyant infighting and contention. Almost since the group's establishment by American Stewart Copeland, the balance of power appeared tipped in the favor of the ultra-charismatic lead singer. Copeland would rail that Sting was not going to "push me around." Sting would lament that "our egos always get in the way because of our intense differences as people and because we're growing away from each other—me the fastest." Andy Summers, ever the diplomat, would chalk up the three-way tug-of-war to "creative sparks misfiring." I remind Sting that in 1984 he confided that, "The things that make us good together in the first place are still there but they're more difficult to sustain." How long will the brittle alliance be sustained before it's disbanded?

"No one really knows," says Sting, with a quizzical expression. "And, in truth, no one is really concerned. We're all extremely busy. Stewart is immersed in a successful musical life that includes a solo album this summer. Andy's working on a solo record starting next month. We're pleasantly preoccupied, which is a good sign, rather than a bad one."

After dinner, Sting is in the mood for some musical diversion, so we head down to the Lone Star Café, a Greenwich Village ginmill renowned for its robust chili, terrible sightlines, fine sound system and often-impeccable choice of bookings. Dr. John is holding forth this evening, with bassist Hiram Bullock and guitarist Will Lee of the David Letterman band sitting in, and Sting is so taken with Mac Rebennack's incomparable gumbo of New Orleans rhumba-boogie and second-line finesse that we linger for two sets. Everyone is nicely snookered on Lone Star beer and more vodka when Sting begins bopping around the balcony, exclaiming, "Shit, this place is just like the music pubs I knew back in Newcastle!"

The select group of band members, record industry confidants and friends are nearly as edgy as Sting on the evening of April 29. He has chosen this moment to unveil the completed record, introducing it in a private listening session in the conference room at A&M Records' Madison Avenue offices. A sumptuous spread of fruits, cheeses, assorted pates and other gourmet delicacies is laid out, and the Moët Chandon flows freely as the reel-to-reel deck on the room's costly sound system is carefully threaded with the precious master tape. The forward button is struck with a flourish, but the deck doesn't work.

A fitful grumble is heard from the back of the room. It's Sting. He hasn't slept in nearly 36 hours. The sun sinks into the depths of the skyline and Sting paces, cracking diffident jokes, as a solution is sought. The pacing continues.

Most of those present have already heard the rough mixes, marveling at the shimmering magnetism of the multi-tracked vocal harmonies on the first single, "Set Them Free." Murmured debates commence around the room; the majority seem to agree that the album is the equal of, if not superior to, any of the Police's LPs, but can't agree which song is the record's masterpiece. Perhaps the effervescent, Barbados-composed "Love is the 7th Wave," with its chiming calypso brio and agree one-drop reggae drumming? Maybe "Fortress Around Your Heart," with its ebb and flow undertow and rising surges of thundersome rocking? Or "Russians," the moving hymn of parental anguish in a world that can no longer recognize itself in the labyrinth of its military machinations, Sting intoning with a bell-like clarity of intent, "Believe me when I say to you/I hope the Russians love their children too."

The debate remains unresolved as a backup cassette of *The Dream of the Blue Turtles* is located, slipped into the cartridge and rewound. There is a low, rumbling hiss as the tape begins to roll . . . and Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." marches briskly out of the monitors.

Stranded in the center of the conference room, Sting turns on his heel and strolls out to the bar in the hallway. He orders himself a brimming glass of champagne.

A quick sip. Then he lifts his Moët Chandon to no one in particular and grimaces in feigned despair. "I guess I'm gonna have to find a totally, totally new sound for this solo thing," he announces. "I go all the way to the Caribbean with a group of the world's best jazz musicians, work my ass off, and I still wind up sounding a little too fuckin' much like the Boss!"



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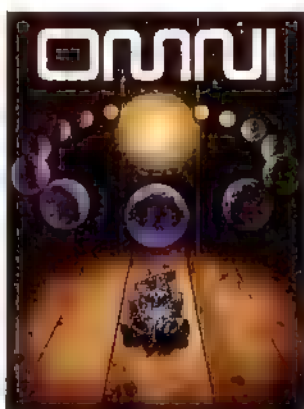
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JUSTICE AT LAST

Recognition comes
to L.A. band Lone
Justice.

Article by Chris Morris

Try to pretend you're at a party, and you're really enjoying the music."

A production assistant yells these words of encouragement through a bullhorn to a group of 30 video extras, who are growing increasingly numbed by the nighttime chill on a downtown Los Angeles rooftop. It's the shank end of a day-long shoot, yet enthusiasm on the videogenically decrepit location has hardly waned at all. The supporting cast is composed of family and friends of the band being immortalized, and excitement about the group's long-overdue first video remains high. The cast maintains their spirits by bantering with the girls who peer from windows in the Job Corps hotel across the street.

"It's the Jacksons' Halloween video," one wise-acre yells to the distant onlookers, who mistake one of the young extras for Billy Idol.

As the crew hurriedly repositions lights for the next shot, director Mary Lambert, a small, intense blonde woman, huddles in conference with a pretty, straw-haired girl, who sags slightly from the weight of the Telecaster strapped across her shoulders; she is clad in a Depression-era gingham dress and, to ward off the chill, a button-festooned baseball jacket.

Lambert is known in video circles as one of the hottest directors around: her visualizations of Madonna's "Borderline," "Like a Virgin," and "Material Girl" are credited with establishing the sleaze-rock icon's current MTV and chart ubiquity. Geffen Records, which has bankrolled the present shoot, is hoping that Lambert's work on "Ways to be Wicked" will help turn a similar trick for the 20-year-old singer with whom the director is engaged in hushed conversation.

The vocalist's name is Maria McKee, her band is called Lone Justice, and the consensus among L.A. critics, music scenesters, and record company mavens is that the young lady is headed for Stardom.

In the two years since Lone Justice broke onto the L.A. club circuit playing romping country-influenced rock 'n' roll, McKee, a petite dynamo with a voice the size of G. Brattar, has collected a brace of reviews that would turn even Michael Jackson bright chartreuse. Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times* compared her to Chrissie Hynde, Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt, and Janis Joplin in a recent five-page cover story in the paper's Sunday entertainment section. Mikal Gilmore of the *Herald-Examiner* cites Bruce Springsteen, Prince,

and even Johnny Rotten. Such published ravings won the band an increasingly large local audience, which often included celebrity drop-ins: Parton, Ronstadt, and Emmylou Harris all appeared at Lone Justice shows to check out the nascent competition.

A&R men hesitated to snap up the group, however, daunted by their rootsy sound. Geffen Records decided to take a chance on the group after investing in a demo session in the spring of 1983. The label, which, as one writer has noted, has kvetched about Elton John and Donna Summer's recent work as too uncommercial, has taken no chances about maximizing its large investment of time and money.

For Lone Justice's eponymous debut record, Geffen enlisted producer Jimmy Iovine, whose recording credits include Tom Petty, Bruce Springsteen, and Patric Smith. The first single, "Ways to be Wicked," was written by Petty and his guitarist Mike Campbell; the album also includes a song co-authored by McKee and ex-Springsteen guitarist Steve Van Zandt. Petty's expert keyboard player, Benmont Tench, was brought in to fill out the group's studio sound (and to play live with the band for a year), and Eurythmics' Annie Lennox did some uncredited back-up singing. Last year, during the first week of recording, Ron Wood and Bob Dylan dropped by the studio to kibitz and jam; Dylan also contributed a song, which was recorded but not released.

Touring arrangements are similarly first-class. Lone Justice's first major road stint, apart from brief work opening for L.A.'s transplanted country-rockers Rank

and File in '83, was a month-long, 22-date siege this spring as the opening act on U2's North American tour, which took the band into such enormous arenas as Madison Square Garden, the Nassau Coliseum, and Philadelphia's Spectrum. After hitting Europe, Lone Justice will perform as openers on Tom Petty's summer tour.

The mammoth audiences at these shows will see a Lone Justice that is significantly different from the perky country band that charmed club audiences two years ago. Their sound, which initially leaned heavily on a blatantly rural two-step, has been channeled, after many hours of work by producer Iovine, into a fatter, more diverse aural canvas daubed with shades of blues, R&B, and Stonesy rock 'n' roll.

The band has moved about as far away from its musical foundations as possible, as Ryan Hedgecock, Lone Justice's co-founder and lead guitarist, tells it. Huddled in a stairwell to escape the nip in the air at the video location, Hedgecock, whose only other band was the short-lived rockabilly group Bedrock, explains that Lone Justice's roots lie in L.A.'s large neo-rockabilly community.

"All the rockabilly kids used to go to this drive-in called Angelo's, on State College Boulevard in Orange County down by Disneyland," says Hedgecock, a good-humored 24-year-old who resembles a young Gary Cooper. "We used to bring acoustic guitars and jam and sing out in the parking lot. I saw Maria there singing—there was a chance at that time that she would



Youni Lenquette



Geary Leonard

join the Red Devils [a local country/rockabilly outfit] I was really impressed with her voice; I thought she was great. She wasn't doing anything, so we just started playing together, in her room, for six months. Then we started a couple of acoustic gigs.

"When we first started off, it was more rockabilly," he continues. "Our tastes went more toward... Hedgecock hesitates, and has to be prodded to mention the genre that dare not speak its name.

"Country. I don't wanna say it, but I'm gonna say it anyway. When we started playing with a great rock 'n' roll band, it got to be more country-influenced rock."

I ask why Hedgecock is so leery about attaching the term "country" commercial poison in the view of promo folk—to Lone Justice's style.

"You know why—we've been pegged so much into that," Hedgecock responds honestly. "I don't consider it solely country anymore. I love the country songs, but, by pegging us as a country band, it's taking away from another aspect of our band that I think is a real valid part of it—the rhythm-and-blues-oriented rock 'n' roll."

"It wasn't like it was a conscious effort, like, 'Country won't sell,'" he adds. "We gradually started getting away from the hardcore country stuff. Maria discovered the Velvet Underground, and she started flipping. We all had a liking for the Velvet Underground, and it started out from that."

I point out that playing Velvet songs like "Sweet Jane" and "Head Held High," and other covers like Talking Heads' "Heaven," is a way of messing with people's expectations—which Lone Justice seems to enjoy.

"Of course, of course," Hedgecock replies, with a hint of a sly smile. "Why do you think we did 'Fox Lady' at a country bar like the Palomino? We did it with distortion, screaming, amps turned up to ten. I get off on that stuff."

Lone Justice's move away from hardcore country really began with the entrance of Marvin Etzioni. Brooklyn-born, L.A.-raised, he is no die-hard country buff, his best known local unit was a poppish late-'70s group called The Model. He was active in Lone Justice's career nearly from the start. He encouraged their original writing, contributed songs of his own to their set (including "Working Late" and "You Are the Light" on the new LP), and produced their initial demos. He signed on full-time as the band's bassist in early 1983.

"After The Model broke up, I wanted to find a new incentive, a new musical center, a new inspiration," he says, with the seriousness that colors most of his talk about music. "I don't find roots music in an imitative way, but more as a new source for me—it's like fresh water."

"I love modern music; I think Peter Gabriel is one of the few innovators of this decade. I like to incorporate Peter Gabriel with Woody Guthrie—those are the sounds I walk around with. In a sense, that may not be too far off from what happens when a band like Lone Justice goes into the studio. You're using the technology that Peter Gabriel uses, and you go back 50 years for an inspiration, to the Guthries and Hank Williamses and people like that. There isn't anything that I would eliminate from the vocabulary."

I point out to Etzioni that, when Lone Justice was first tearing up the clubs, its vocabulary was extremely limited: Almost the entire set was composed of up-tempo, two-beat country stomps that made for very repetitious listening.

"Originally, it was," he admits. "We really pinpointed what we were going for. We were excited by that, we were inspired by that. I think that's what attracted people to it. I don't think anybody sounded like Lone Justice when we originally came out."

But, even though the band made an apparent move toward an even harder country sound by bringing in drummer Don Heffington from Emmylou Harris' Hot Band in late 1983, the band refocused and diversified its sound in the studio. Etzioni feels that this move was a necessary one.

"If you notice, any major album has depth to it, and

"One night, Marvin and I sat up all night and played The Troggs, the Standells, Lou Reed, The Sex Pistols, and we realized rock 'n' roll's great music. It was a rediscovery."

I think that Jimmy [Iovine] wanted that," he says. "I don't think that Jimmy would want to produce an album that would have 10 two-beat country songs in the same tempo on it."

I mention that the outside contributions by such established talents as Petty and Van Zandt had a lot to do with the broader sound of Lone Justice's repertoire.

"In terms of being receptive to outside material, the more open the people in the band are, the bigger the band will become by allowing that to happen," Etzioni replies. "Jimmy produced Patti Smith, and Springsteen



Maria McKee (above), lead singer, (below left, L-R) Ryan Hedgecock, lead guitar, Maria, Don Heffington, drums, Marvin Etzioni, bass, and, Tony Cilkyson, rhythm-guitar; and (above left, the lovely Maria

wrote her first single, which was a real smart marriage on Jimmy's part. I don't think artists should be afraid of those kind of things.

"I think you can have both—you can have a hit song and you can have musical integrity," he concludes. "I think that is what we've accomplished."

As the last straggling crew members pack, a search begins for Maria McKee. She is found sprawled half-asleep on a couch in the RV that is the band's dressing room and refuge for the night. The slightly disheveled young singer struggles to focus her eyes on a "Twilight Zone" rerun on the nearby TV set. I tentatively begin my questioning by surmising that her booming style has some roots in the belting projection of singers from the Broadway stage.

"When I was a real little kid, that's what I was into," McKee answers softly. "Then, when I got into high

school, I started getting into rock 'n' roll, thinking I wanted to go into it myself somehow, be in a band."

I wonder if this wasn't at least in part due to the influence of her brother, Bryan MacLean, singer and songwriter for Love, the seminal Sunset Strip band of the late '60s (and composer of Lone Justice's show-stopping ballad "Don't Toss Us Away").

"He had a lot to do with it, because he encouraged me to sing," she says. "Then he formed a band and asked me to sing in it."

I momentarily recall with amusement an image of the 15-year-old Maria McKee, her cornflower blue eyes wide with awe and a hint of terror, socking out backup vocals with the Bryan MacLean Band, and then shouting the b-ues as a guest of Top Jimmy's scabrous ensemble The Rhythm Pigs in the dank basement of Hollywood's Cathay De Grande five years before.

I ask what sort of material Lone Justice played in their earliest days.

"Most of 'em were covers. George Jones, Rose Maddox, Gram Parsons, Kitty Wells," McKee explains. "Marvin was the one who said, 'You've got to have original material.' Then he started bringing in songs that weren't country at all, that were like 'East of Eden' [the Bo Diddleyesque tune that opens the Lone Justice act]. He played it for us and we said, 'Well, yeah, it's great—for Bruce Springsteen.'"

So the early band suffered somewhat from musical tunnel vision?

"Absolutely, at the beginning," she says. "I wanted to be in a traditional country band that played with aggression. If you tried to talk to me about the Rolling Stones, I'd just go, 'No!' I was real narrow-minded. It was like pulling teeth."

"It wasn't like we said, 'Oh! We better change!' It was like, 'Wow, that's an interesting song. That's an interesting record. Let's play that kind of music.' One night, Marvin and I sat up all night and played the Troggs, the Standells, Lou Reed, The Sex Pistols, and we realized rock 'n' roll's great music. It was a rediscovery."

The two-year transition from club band to national act has wrought other changes, I tell McKee. Her singing, always flexible and country-pure from the start, has acquired a veneer of rock 'n' roll toughness to it.

"Maybe so," she muses. "Although, when I was in my brother's band, the stuff we used to sing was a lot tougher than the country and western-influenced stuff that we were doing."

"I'm 20 years old—I'm obviously gonna grow a lot more as a singer. I'll learn, probably in the next three years, how to hold back, as opposed to just being very aggressive and very forceful. I may learn that I need to hold back more. Who knows? Maybe not."

Holding back, as McKee herself admits, is not one of her strong suits at present; every Lone Justice show is animated by the singer's alt-out, vocally precocious performing style.

"If you're giving a performance and you don't give it everything you possibly can, then you might as well not do it," she says ingenuously. "Why even bother?"

It's now approaching midnight, and McKee looks like she's ready to crumple. The last few days filled with club shows, the video shoot, and last-minute preparations for the L2 tour, have taken their toll on the young rock 'n' roller. I ask if all of the pressure is finally getting to her.

"Oh, my God, yes. I'm going through tremendous pressure," she says candidly. "The weaker side of me has a tendency to get a little bit devastated by it. I get this real panicky feeling at times. I'm being very frank with you, you know."

"But I think to myself, this is the way it's gonna be for the rest of your life. You're not gonna have week-ends off. It's gonna be a lot of hard work and a lot of non-stop motion. I figure I just have to get used to it."

I wonder aloud to Maria McKee if her ambitions for the future include rock stardom. In her small, somewhat fatigued voice, she says something refreshing that makes me smile.

"I shy away from the term 'rock star,' or 'star' anything. It's very trite."



Jack Murphy stole the Star of India, stole some hearts, took a life and paid for it all.

MURPH THE SURF

Article by Elliott Murphy

While the Beach Boys sang "I Get Around," a beach boy from Miami Beach and his partner, both dressed in pastel alpaca sweaters and tapered sharkskin pants, snuck into the American Museum of Natural History in New York City on Halloween eve, 1964, and slipped away with the world's largest sapphire—the Star of India.

For those of us who liked to call ourselves surfers, the pre-psychedelic '60s were a time of plaid Pendleton jackets, huarache sandals and Hobie boards. We had strange heroes: Duke Kahanamoku, the ancient-looking Hawaiian who supposedly invented modern surfing; and a guy named Mickey Dora, "The King of Malibu," who supposedly coined the phrase "hang ten" when he walked to the tip of his board one day to shove someone else off his wave. But then came Murph the Surf, the handsome, blond, legendary Florida champion, playboy and jewel thief—and long after the others had faded, his name remained indelibly etched into the records of pop mythology, along with Bonnie and Clyde and Billy the Kid.

I did have a special interest here. "Murph the Surf" was my nickname too, derived from a cartoon in *Surfer* magazine. Bob Dylan wrote in the liner notes of his 1965 album, *Bringing It All Back Home*: "I'm standing here watching the parade—feeling combination of Sleepy John Estes, Jayne Mansfield, Humphrey Bogart, Mortimer Snerd, Murph the Surf and so forth." In 1983, I released an album called *Murph the Surf*. My girlfriend's grandfather, convinced I was that Murph the Surf, told her it could be dangerous to live with me.

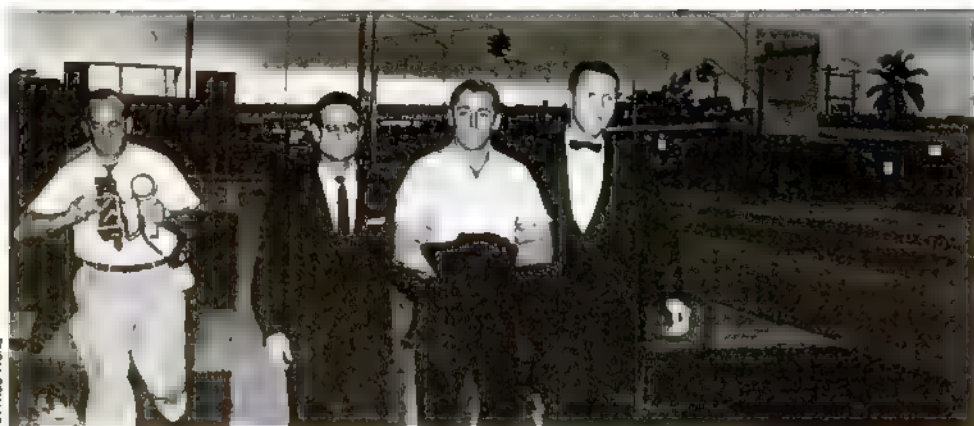
A few months ago, Jack "Murph the Surf" Murphy was released from the Zephyrhills Correctional Institute in Florida after serving 15 years of a double-life-plus-20-years sentence. He was 47 years old and a born-again Christian. Looking dapper in a gray pinstripe suit and red tie, his blond hair now splashed with gray, Murph saluted the prisoners and gave a thumbs-up sign as he left. I figured that if I was ever going to meet my namesake, it was now or never.

There were some strange developments following the heist at the Museum of Natural History. The burglar alarm was old and rat-eaten. It didn't even work the night of the crime. Naturally, city officials were blamed, and an official investigation was called for. When asked about the history of the Star of India, the museum could give no real answer; the tales about it were murky, unverifiable. Allegedly, it was plucked, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* style, from some gigantic Buddha's forehead by a 19th-century rascal and smuggled out of Bombay. It certainly wasn't donated by the Indian government. And to make matters more intriguing, it seemed that none of the stolen gems were insured. Perhaps the property was already hot? The Star certainly has its own karma. It made a star out of the man who stole it, and his name will be forever linked with its fame.

Murph and Allan Kuhn, his partner, were in the museum for hours, hiding behind display cases whenever the guards made their rounds. Occasionally, to kill time, Murph would take in a display or two. Once, a dime rolled out of his pocket as a museum guard passed. He always carried a dime for emergencies. It would make a great phone company advertisement.

The 535-carat Star of India, a sapphire the size of a golf ball, felt ice-cold in Murph's hand. The star that runs all the way through the stone was hypnotic. What was he going to do with it? A fence in Miami talked of a "private collector" in Brazil willing to pay a half-million dollars to possess it. Certainly, Murph was not going to wear it.

Along with the Star of India, Murph and Kuhn stole 22 other jewels, among them the DeLong Ruby and the



Midnight Star sapphire. Then they partied for the next few days at the Cambridge House Hotel in Manhattan. A suspicious bellboy tipped off the police. A short time later, they were busted; records showed they both had a propensity for jewel thefts in Miami.

The Star of India was recovered from a locker in the Miami bus terminal. Half of the other jewels were never found; presumably, they were re-cut and sold. The prosecution claimed the burglars copied the theft shown in the film *Topkapi*. (Years later, there would be another movie, *Murph the Surf*, starring Robert Conrad and Don Stroud.) Murph's girlfriend committed suicide, and he was allowed to attend her funeral before serving 21 months of a three-year sentence on Rikers Island.

Upon his release from prison in New York, Murph was brought back to Miami to stand trial for allegedly pistol-whipping actress Eva Gabor three years earlier and stealing her \$25,000 diamond ring. He had a reputation as a ladies' man, and Ms. Gabor refused to testify; something about "commitments on the coast." The charges were dropped. In Los Angeles during 1967, Murph and Kuhn were again arrested, this time in connection with a string of jewel thefts. There wasn't enough evidence; the charges were dropped. In January, 1968, he was caught red-handed at the scene of a robbery-in-progress at a mansion on "millionaires' row" in Miami Beach. Murph made a dramatic escape attempt by jumping through a plate-glass window. A Florida judge declared Murph insane, and unfit to stand trial. Murph

An athletic voice came on the line. "Hello, Jack Murphy here."

I explained who I was. He took notes. He said he had to clear all "media stuff" through the authorities down there. I told him about my album, *Murph the Surf*. His voice perked up.

"How did it do?" he asked cautiously.

1-000-400-0000 OLD HAND—Convicted murderer Jack "Murph the Surf" Murphy reassures a group of teenage boys from Youth Hall in Miami who were brought to the prison at Raiford as a warning. Murphy admonished the boys to turn away from a life of crime that would lead them to prison. (AP Wirephoto)



(XTP1) ZEPHYRHILLS, Fla., Dec. 20 - MURPHY RELEASED—Jack "Murph the Surf" Murphy talks to newsmen outside the Zephyrhills Correctional Institution after his release Thursday morning. He was serving time for the slaying of a California woman. Murphy made headlines in 1964 when with two friends he stole the \$900,000 Star of India sapphire from the Museum of Natural History in New York City. (AP Wirephoto)

claimed he was a "modern-day Robin Hood." The D.A. was so mad, he withdrew all his pending cases from that same judge.

But, on February 17, 1968, Murph and "karate expert" Jack Griffith were brought to trial for the murder of two young California secretaries. The women had quit their jobs at a Los Angeles brokerage house a week before \$500,000 in securities were discovered gone. They were shot, bludgeoned, and their bodies dumped in a tidal canal named Whiskey Creek near Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Murphy based his defense on insanity. When asked if he was worried, he said, "If I was guilty, I would be, but I'm not."

According to Kuhn, his buddy got two life sentences simply because he's Murph the Surf. "That notoriety got him. You can spit in people's faces for only so long before they'll start to fight back." The judge told Murph he'd never be allowed to walk the streets again.

Walk the streets? Hell, Murph the Surf was stuck in traffic! That's what the secretary told me when I called the halfway house in Orlando, Florida, where he was staying after his release. She thought I was a relative.

I called back. I was put on hold for a long time. It reminded me of surfing, when you're waiting for a wave.



MIAMI, Fla., Oct. 31—SKIN DIVERS ARRESTED BY FBI IN JEWEL ROBBERY—Two skin divers were arrested here today by the FBI and charged in the New York jewel robbery. The FBI, which reported the arrests, said none of the gems, which were stolen from the Museum of Natural History in New York, had been recovered. Shown being taken from the FBI office here is Jack Holland Murphy, 27. FBI agents are not identified. AP Wirephoto 0071825 1964

"Sold well . . . in France," I replied.

"Pretty good!" said Murph, and he laughed a little. He had restrictions on what he could do. It would be at least three months before he could talk freely to the press. It seemed everyone was calling him.

"We really don't want any publicity," said Murph. "We don't need any."

Understatement of the year? Maybe. When he walked through the prison gates after 15 years, he was cheered by his fellow prisoners, who sang "Amazing Grace." Asked if he felt remorse for his crimes, he said, "Definitely." Did he feel he had paid his debt to society? "Absolutely. My tab is paid."

"We've put him under the microscope, and he has changed," Zephyrhills Superintendent Ray Henderson told reporters. "He's not a threat to come out and commit crimes. . . ."

"I've known him for a long time," said Frank Constantino, the ex-con president of Christian Prison Ministries, who testified on Murphy's behalf before Florida's Probation and Parole Commission. "Murphy is simply not the same man he was."

However, I still would like to meet the old Murph the Surf, and talk about surfing . . . maybe visit a museum, I don't know. I have to say I'm glad he's not serving double life anymore, and that he's out. I hope he can do some good when he goes into prisons all over the country, telling men about the options in their lives and about God. I wished Murph the best. He said, "God bless you, brother."

Speaking to Murph the Surf haunted me for a while. I finally sat down and turned on the TV. A bunch of guys in aloha shirts and white pants were running around, shooting at each other under the palm trees and delivering stolen merchandise to a mysterious fence who lounged on a yacht a mile long. The show was "Miami Vice." Murph may be entitled to a cut.

TOURE KUNDA

The Touré brothers make fabulous music that is tribal-rooted and jazz-cool.

At the Sounds of Brazil (S.O.B.'s) nightclub in Manhattan, your attention is immediately drawn upward to a flotilla of gourds hanging from the ceiling like a terrestrial constellation. A staple of food and music-making in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the gourd is more than just decor; in a way it is the clarion that beckons the spirits of meringue, batucada, Afro-funk and reggae.

As I enter, the joint is jumping. The band on stage is Touré Kunda, a cultural export from Senegal by way of Paris, led by three blood brothers who six years ago sojourned from West Africa to France. The band is a joyous interracial spectacle: five Africans and three Frenchmen working a festive jam. Drums palaver with synthesizers and traps, while Senegalese falsetto voices are pitched in and warbled high above, conjuring flocks of whistling tropical birds in a bewitched rain forest.

On stage, behind the Kunda brothers, regal Cameroonian saxophonist Ben Beilinga wails in a voice that reminds of King Curtis

and John Coltrane. Synthman Loy Erlich emulates the West African stringed instrument called *kora* with a mesmerizing spidery delicacy, while dreadlocked bassist Roger Chyco Dru lays the kind of bass foundation Aston "Familyman" Barrett brought to Bob Marley and the Wailers, and French drummer Michel Abihissa locks his traps as dead in the pocket as any soul brother ever mounted.

The Touré brothers themselves, robed in blazing color, limber and kinetic, are adding crystalline vocal harmonies and ferocious percussive beats.

The crowd is in a frenzy. The Senegalese émigrés are chanting call-and-response in Mandingo and French. Folks who wouldn't know a Mandingo from a meringue are doing the mashed potato or some personalized equivalent of the infectious African groove.

Downstairs in the dressing room, I meet Ismaila, the only English-speaking member of the Touré fraternity. Though his gift of tongues has burdened him with press duties on this debut American tour, Ismaila is handling







it with congeniality and aplomb. When we begin to discuss the band's mix of musical styles, he tells me that question could take some time to answer. So we reschedule for the following afternoon. As I move to the streets, Touré Kunda's sweet throb still encircles my brain

Entering S.O.B.'s when there's no crowd is spooky; makes one wonder where all of last night's revelry went. The band's equipment mutely crowding the stage is haunting, hard to believe how animated the touch of human hands will make the serene little assemblage of metal, wood, skins, and wires mounted on stage.

Ismaila is surrounded by his brothers, band members and business associates. I note the reedy and supple Ismaila is immensely serene, while dreaded Ousmane projects a cockier brand of cool, though it is accompanied by a wide, generous smile. Reposed somewhat like a shadow figure, a detached Sixu, reputedly the mystic of the band, is draped on the dressing room couch, and seems more empathetic with the walls than with those gathered around him.

While Touré Kunda gets some of its influence from funk, the group's roots in its own tradition are deep, with a slight nod to Western technological advances.

"In our city in Senegal, music lives inside the life of everybody, morning, noon, and night," says Ismaila. "Every year there is a training for young boys and girls, an initiation for those from eight to 15 years. The name of this initiation is *Djima Dong*, which means the dance of life. For about six months they take young boys and girls to what's known as the Secret Forest. Once there, they have to learn how to be a

man, how to be a woman, how to live among people. Here you would just take your child to school; there, we have school and *Djima Dong*. Around this initiation, every day and every movement is accompanied by a different rhythm. Even when an initiate asks to go to sleep, there is a rhythm to accompany him. This is where we of Touré Kunda take all our inspiration.

"When we rehearse or compose," continues Ismaila, "we always try to get the keyboard and guitar especially to make their instruments sound like a traditional African instrument, like the *kora* or *bailaphone*. You know, when we play in Senegal and the *griots* come to see us they ask, 'Who is playing the *kora*?' When they find out it is Loy and his synthesizer they're surprised. Having electric instruments allows us to play many different kinds of music and of course, while we take our inspiration from *Djima Dong*, other members of the band are influenced by other music—jazz, reggae, funk, what have you.

"People ask why we have electric instruments to emulate the *kora*, rather than have the *kora* itself. Well, you know, the *kora* is a very personal instrument. Before you can learn to play the *kora* you must first learn the Mandingo language. The *kora* is really for the *griot* you see, for him to tell our history in a way not unlike that of a journalist. In our songs we talk a lot about contemporary problems, injustices, problems with our government and the Organization of African Unity—things that concern people. If a song does not have a message, it is no good. We talk about God and love between people, though not so much about love between man and woman, like you hear in other music.

"We like Fela very much because his music deals with reality, too. However, we don't say it the same way Fela does. You see, Mandingo is a very special language. Two Mandingo can be together and say one wants to say something special to his woman. Well, in Mandingo he can say out loud what he is feeling to his woman, but put it in such a way that another Mandingo will not know what he is saying."

Touré, says Ismaila, means elephant, while *kunda* means house. The Touré brothers have been a musical family since the '60s, when the three brothers took over singing chores for a town band abandoned by their older brother, Amadou. "This was 1966," says Ismaila.

In 1975 they followed Amadou to Paris, intent on expanding the range of their music and their audience. There they met bassist Roger, and guitarist Jean-Claude Bonaventure, and further evolved Touré Kunda's recombining fusion of African tradition and electric Western pop. Two years ago, a tragedy befell the band when Amadou took ill at a gig and died at the club they were performing in. Though shaken by this incident, Touré Kunda continued stretching the boundaries of African pop and drawing sell-out audiences all over Africa.

Befittingly, the second stop on their American tour took them to Minneapolis and First Avenue, the home of a black American musician, Prince, whose music also adventurously modernizes his cultural heritage.


"When we left Boston and told

people we were going to Minneapolis, they thought it was very strange," says Ismaila. "But when we got into the club First Avenue (Prince's base) and see people's response to our music, we wonder what people had against Minneapolis. You know, in Paris, when we first started playing, people would sit and applaud politely. We were very surprised here in New York and in Minneapolis that people really knew how to party to our music, that they understand what our music is all about."

"I think to confuse what is cosmopolitan with what is good is wrong; feeling for music is something you either have in your heart or you don't. Prince is making good music, but I don't feel Prince like I felt James Brown or Mahalia Jackson. I don't feel anything from this guy."

Considering that nobody's done more to put the lie to Minnesota's hicksville stigma than Prince, it's ironic Ismaila can't "feel" him, especially given that both he and Prince love James Brown.

Back on stage, the biracial band, led by Africans from a former French colony, initiate the heirs of the colonizers into the dance of life, with Touré Kunda's roots-conscious yet futuristic African bomp.

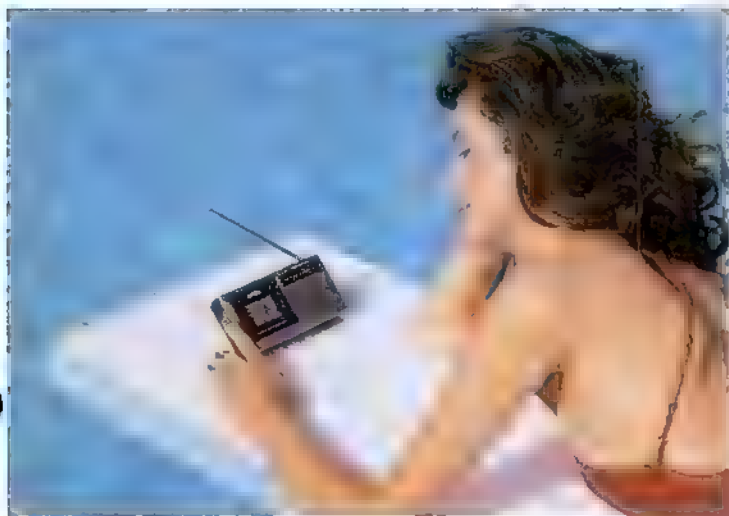
In the crowd, folk are dancing and cheering wildly as Ismaila and his brethren slip into the hyperkinetic trance of a drum exchange: As if long-limbed dervishes, their bodies swirl, spin, and dive around their instruments. Their rapture becomes my own: the dance of life is more than just an initiation; it's also a journey back to the mouth of creation. And as messengers from our collective point of origin, Touré Kunda possesses the power to move us into circular motion, from our beginnings to beyond and back again. 

The brothers Touré: (previous page, the cool cocky dread, Ousmane, (above) the shadowy mystic, Sixu; and (below) Ismaila, a figure of immense serenity



STATE OF THE ART

Now, through the miracles of science, the tube can be your constant companion.



Column by Edward Rasen

George Burns and Gracie Allen. Sid Caesar. Milton Berle. Jack Webb/Sgt. Friday. Jackie Gleason and the Honeymooners. Ozzie and Harriet. Edward R. Murrow. I Love Lucy. Leave It to Beaver. Ed Sullivan. The Mickey Mouse Club. Gunsmoke. The Lone Ranger. Twilight Zone. Sesame Street. Mary Tyler Moore. The Fonz. Archie Bunker. Johnny Carson. Walter Cronkite. Dallas. 60 Minutes. MTV. The images fade but the memories remain.

Television has become a wasteland but, one must admit, it is also a powerful and integral part of Western society and culture. Yet, strange as it may seem, the medium has only existed since 1929, when the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) began the first daily system.

General Electric, during 1929, began operating an experimental station in Schenectady, New York, that transmitted programs three times a week to a very small audience equipped with experimental receivers. Also in 1929, the Bell Telephone Laboratories demonstrated crude color television pictures. Then, in 1936, American Telephone and Telegraph laid an experimental coaxial cable between New York and Philadelphia which eventually became the basis of national network television. The first electronic televisions—employing then state-of-the-art cathode ray tubes (CRTs)—were sold in kit form to the public in mid-1938. The first factory-assembled kit (the Dumont 180, featuring an 8 x 10 inch screen) was offered to the public in December, 1938. David Sarnoff, in 1939, launched the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the first television network, with an opening day broadcast

from the New York World's Fair. However, the outbreak of World War II halted development of the medium. Only 5,000 televisions were produced between 1938 and 1941.

A new era in home entertainment was formally inaugurated on September 17, 1946 when sets with so-called "large" 12- and 14-inch screens were offered to the public. Sales of televisions totaled more than 150,000 sets by the end of 1947, rose to 4 million in 1949, and 10 million in 1950. CBS/Columbia introduced, in 1951, the first color television (Columbia 12CC2) to the public. CBS began broadcasting several color programs, but after several months of disappointing sales of color sets, production was halted, as were the broadcasts.

Television as a medium remained a black-and-white experience until October 31, 1953, when the first regular color program was broadcast. The next important date in the history of television is January 1, 1954, which marks the first nationwide network color broadcast. The program was the Tournament of Roses Parade from Pasadena, California.

Television technology can be divided into four time periods: the mechanical era of the '20s and '30s when pictures were produced by mechanical means; the pre-World War II electronic era, characterized by the production of the CRT in the late '30s; the post-war electronic era; and the new fourth period, characterized by the use of liquid crystal display (LCD) technology rather than cathode ray tubes.

In a regular television, the video signal is converted into a picture by an electron gun that emits a beam that sweeps across

525 lines in a phosphor-coated cathode ray tube (CRT) sixty times a second. The image is created by the glowing phosphors in each line. However, the relatively high power consumption, bulk and weight of CRTs make them difficult to use in truly portable televisions.

The research-and-development group within Hattori Seiko, a Japanese conglomerate, worked five years to overcome the limitations of CRTs. The Hattori LCD color micro-TVs employ an imaging system totally different from the electronically scanned CRT. The video signal activates a precise number of dot like picture elements (pixels), one row at a time. The pixels are switched on and off by microscopic thin-film transistors (TFTs) placed at each pixel. The image is produced by LCDs rather than phosphors. The rod-like organic molecules respond to electrical signals from the TFTs.

Anyway, moving right along, you should know that the LCDs do not require much power, are very compact and weigh very little. Also, since the LCDs are made of transparent materials, the screen can be back-lit with sunlight, allowing a clear, vibrant picture in daylight.

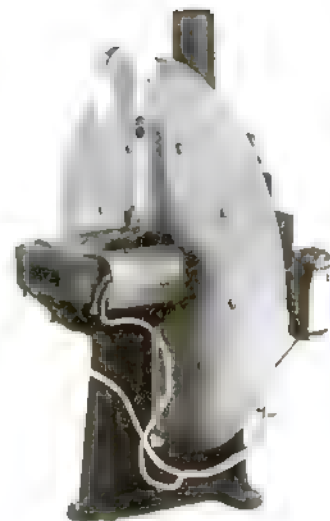
Among other things, Hattori owns the Seiko Time Corporation, which produces Seiko watches, the Citizen Watch Company; and Epson, a computer, printer and electronics manufacturing company. All three companies are marketing their versions of micro televisions.

Seiko's TFT color micro-TV has 52,800 TFTs in a 2-inch diagonal flat screen that is less than 1/4 of an inch thick. The dimensions of the hand-held model are approximately 6 x 3 x 1 inches and it weighs less than one pound, including five AA-size batteries. The unit can operate on AC with an optional AC adapter and receives a full range of VHF and UHF channels. Standard features include video, audio and earphone input jacks. The video terminal allows use with video cassette and disc players or as a monitor for a video camera. Suggested retail price is \$400.

The Epson Elf is virtually the same size and weight as the Seiko, has the same features (except the video terminal), and also retails for \$400. The Citizen Pocket TV features a 2.7 inch screen, measures a mere 5.3 x 2.9 x 0.9 inches, and weighs, with batteries, less than 9 ounces. It has a video terminal like the Seiko and retails for only \$300. However, the Citizen's picture does not match Seiko's or Epson's, since Citizen's screen has only 35,200 pixels versus the 52,800 of its corporate cousins. Citizen also manufactures a black and white unit with an AM radio that retails for \$150.

Casio's TV-1000 color LCD television has a 2.6-inch screen, measures 6 1/4 x 3 3/4 x 1 3/4 inches, and weighs one pound. It has auto tuning with an LCD indicator, an earphone jack and operates on AC or DC current. Suggested retail price is \$300. Casio's TV-21 black-and-white TV has a 2-inch screen and auto tuning, as above. It measures 4 1/4 x 2 1/2 x 3/4 inches, weighs only 7 ounces and uses only two AA batteries. Suggested retail price is \$100.

Sinclair's black-and-white flat screen TV has a 2-inch screen but uses a CRT, although highly modified and three times



brighter than normal CRTs. Otherwise, it is a state-of-the-art marvel with all circuitry on a single integrated circuit (IC) and automatic switching for reception of most UHF transmissions around the world (except France). Power is provided by a flat Polaroid lithium battery which provides approximately 15 hours of playing time, far more than any other unit. Suggested retail price is \$100.

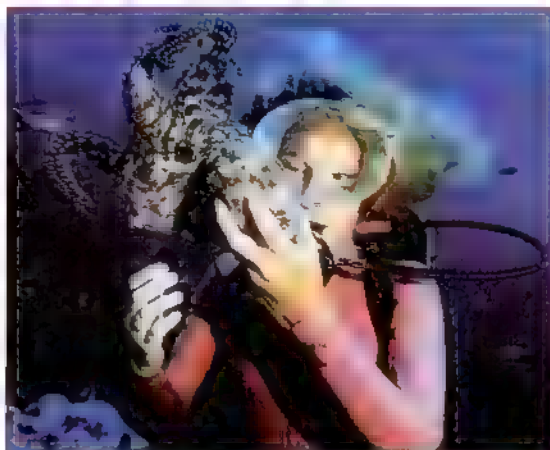
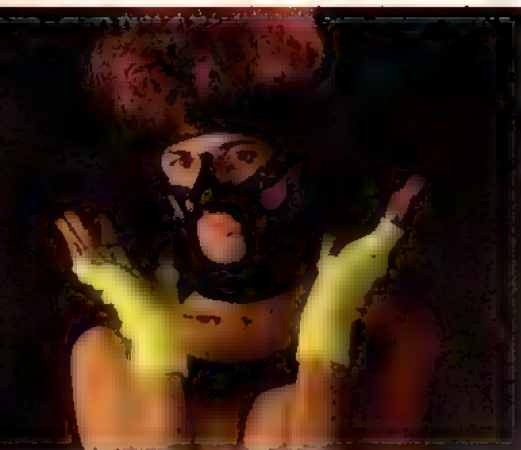
Sony has three Watchman televisions. The FD-25A is a black-and white unit with a 2-inch screen and an AM radio. Suggested retail price is \$230. The FD-30A is the same as above except it has an AM/FM stereo radio and retails for \$280. The FD-40A, Sony's newest Watchman, has a 4-inch screen, four-way AC/DC operation and a video input jack, so it can be used as a monitor for video players or cameras. Suggested retail price is \$200. Sony won't give information about numbers of pixels or screen lines.

If you cannot live without television the answer is at hand.



Clockwise starting with color picture: Epson Elf, the world's first flat-screen color LCD television; a See-All Televisor, manufactured in 1931, and the RCA TRK-12, manufactured in 1939.

TAKE A NEW LOOK



AT THE
PHENOMENA
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THE GOOD,
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AND UGLY.
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UNNATURAL,
AND
SUPERNATURAL.
THE HEROIC
AND VILLAINOUS.
THE
ADVENTUROUS,
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moving images

Egbert & Cisco review videos *Sade*, *Dominatrix*, *Don Henley*, *Murray Head*, *Foreigner*, *Kurtis Blow*, and *'til Tuesday*, plus, *Ben Stein* on the wonderful world of television.

EGBERT & CISCO AT THE VIDEOS



CISCO: Hi, I'm Gene Cisco, rock video critic of the *Middletown Tribune*.

EGBERT: And I'm Roger Egbert of the *Middletown Star Ledger*.

CISCO: This month "At The Videos," we'll be reviewing videos from Don Henley, Foreigner, Simple Minds, Kurtis Blow, 'til Tuesday and more.

EGBERT: But first we have "Smooth Operator" by Sade.

CISCO: The video begins in a smokey nightclub with three sleazy dope dealers with big noses who look like the French Connection.

EGBERT: This looks like the European version of "Miami Vice."

CISCO: Except these dope dealers pack pocket calculators. Sade's microphone is reflected in her lipstick which we see reflected on a hood's sunglasses.

EGBERT: Sade's lips are as big as sunglasses.

CISCO: Here comes the waitress with the drinks. She's the best waitress we've seen in a video so far.

EGBERT: Look! Here's a guy kissing a girl while unzipping the back of her dress. I guess that's smooth operating procedure.

CISCO: Next we have Planet P, doing "Why Me?"

EGBERT: This one starts off with a girl looking at either a robot or an alien or a spaceman levitating.

CISCO: It must be P-man.

EGBERT: She's a blonde, she has a 1950s car.

CISCO: And very '50s breasts.

EGBERT: Nah, her bra's too unstructured. She's an '80s version of a '50s look. She's got on pink gloss lipstick, and she's hallucinating small lesbian children sitting in the backseat.

CISCO: Who's that in the backseat now?

EGBERT: Tom Petty? She's cleaning her windshield now, I guess to stop these hallucinations.

CISCO: I wonder if they used windshield washer fluid in the 1960s to treat hippies on bad LSD trips.

EGBERT: Well, it's not working. Now she sees a skull on the back seat. Now we see a meteor shower, op art, rapid eye movement and mandala test patterns. Now it's really raining, and she's having

trouble seeing where she's going.

CISCO: If I was her I would pull off to the side of the road.

EGBERT: Now her sweater and pearls are on the front seat, but she's gone. She must have beamed up. Wherever she is now, she's nude.

CISCO: Next we have "All She Wants to Do is Dance" by Don Henley.

EGBERT: We can't tell if we're in a Neanderthal cave or post-nuclear rubble or a nightclub or all of the above. Here's a nubile young girl with nice eyebrows, squatting in the rubble, surrounded by Don Henley's band.

CISCO: This doesn't look like the kind of place the Eagles would have gone to.

EGBERT: No, this is not Hotel California.

Here comes someone who definitely looks like an NFL defensive lineman with a Sandinista rag wrapped around his head. He grabs the girl in a menacing, sexual way. She spits in his face and does a pirouette. There's some kind of war going on in this video, but we don't know what it is. Everybody in this video seems like they're auditioning for *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. I'd say if I wasn't depressed already this video would have depressed me.

CISCO: Well, Roger, maybe this next video will cheer you up. It starts out with a large group of happy people. These must be all the famous Ethiopian singing stars.

EGBERT: They're not going to tell us which video this is. Oh, yes they are: Foreigner, "That Was Yesterday." That can't be Foreigner. How many 50-year-old black women are in Foreigner?

CISCO: According to this video, about

two dozen. Wait, there's Foreigner making their entrance now.

EGBERT: All the guys in this group have double chins. I think they are out of touch with the people.

CISCO: They sell millions of records.

EGBERT: Maybe that's why. The stage looks like a giant version of the MTV logo. One guy has on a Vuarnet sweatshirt. Is Vuarnet a bicycle, sunglasses or champagne?

CISCO: Glasses.

EGBERT: Do you think products pay for part of the production costs of these videos? Last month we saw all those garbage trucks. Next we have something hip: Simple Minds doing "(Don't You) Forget About Me," the song from the hit film *The Breakfast Club*.

CISCO: The lead singer is wearing a simple sports jacket. They're doing this song in a real understated way.

EGBERT: This guy's supposed to be a very nice, understated guy. He's the father of Chrissie Hynde's baby and he's married to her. Speaking of kids, there's a lot of toys on the floor. It looks like a Stephen King movie. They look like the kind of toys that are going to go after the kid when the door's closed.

CISCO: Well, Roger, we better skip this video then and go on to "One Night in Bangkok" by Murray Head.

EGBERT: He used to be an actor.

CISCO: I guess this opens in Bangkok.

EGBERT: This is a terrible rap video. It's supposed to be very stylish, with a glass chessboard, people in funny cooie hats, and in neo-colonialist white linen.

CISCO: Is that a Thai person or an Indian?

EGBERT: They're all fashion models in Asian clothing in a room full of heroin smoke. Now they're doing their check-board routine behind a bamboo curtain. This video is really awful. In terms of soulfulness, this guy makes Rappin' Rodney seem like B.B. King. I've seen Mennen after-shave commercials more soulful than this.

CISCO: Does Murray Head really think American teenagers would sit around watching him play chess?

EGBERT: He looks like he puts Old Spice on his Post Toasties.

CISCO: Well, I think you're going to like this next video. It's "Basketball," by Kurtis Blow. It starts out with three basketball players going to the hoop. While he's laying down his rap, a bunch of basketball players are dancing in the background. Now there's a cut to some players slam-dunking. I'll bet the hoop isn't more than three feet off the ground. So far we haven't seen a real basketball player yet. It's amazing, though, how Kurtis mentions every great basketball player.

EGBERT: Bob Cousy isn't mentioned.

CISCO: I don't know why not, it rhymes with Jacuzzi.

EGBERT: He didn't mention "The Round Mound of Rebound," either.

CISCO: Well, he does get in some historical facts, like the night What The Stilt scored 100 points or when the Celtics won titles back to back. There's the Fat Boys. What team are they on? I'd like to see them dunk the ball.

EGBERT: Next we have "Voices Carry"



by 'til tuesday. A girl with very blonde hair is leaving her brownstone. That's a very nice front porch she has there CISCO: They did a wonderful job of stripping and refinishing the front door EGBERT: And those are beautiful front steps. She's a punk rock girl all in black and there's this guy who looks like an after-shave model who walks up to her and offers to carry her guitar. Now he's giving her a hickey. He's wearing an Italian undershirt and she's submitting to his hickey. What's this? He's with another girl; either that, or she's the same girl before she had all her hair cut and dyed CISCO: I think it's the same girl with a different face

EGBERT: Do you think this happens a lot where stockbrokers are going out with model-looking girls and they come home one day and their girlfriend has a blond punk rock haircut and combat boots and they say, "get out of here, you bitch"? See, there she is and now she's presentable. She's got on pearls and a Chanel hat. Oops, he's embarrassed by her rat tail. They're probably at the opera and she's singing a song and he's embarrassed. This video deals with America's number one problem

CISCO: What's that, taking out your wife in public?

EGBERT: No, embarrassment. I like that video. It makes you think

CISCO: Next we have "Domatrix Sleeps Tonight."

EGBERT: I think this is directed by Beth B of Beth and Scott B, famous New York underground super 8 filmmakers

CISCO: This video begins with a very unwholesome-looking girl striking a wooden match on the spike heel of her shoe and lighting a cigarette. I already know I'm not going to like this

EGBERT: She's got on big fake blonde hair and a big fake fur coat. She steps off a bus and poses on the running board of a beat up pickup truck next to a flaming garbage can

CISCO: Inside the garbage can is her boyfriend

EGBERT: Now she's standing on another garbage can, looking in the window of the garage while, inside, the guy is taking off his sleeveless black T-shirt and is about to take a drink when she roughly grabs him by the hair, twists his head around like a good dominatrix, and strokes him on the cheek. Now she dumps her cigarette into his Orange Crush. Now here comes the dominatrix brigade in their leather uniforms and they go into their act. What do you call that kind of dancing?

CISCO: Maybe they're the new "Love Boat" dance troupe

EGBERT: Now they're oozing all over the

cars in the auto body shop, hanging from chains, doing various kinds of exercises on top of a 1957 Chevy. Now the girls are again undulating in their leather underwear. This video was directed by a woman, so it must not be sexist. They're acting out a woman's fantasy of a man's fantasy of what a woman's all about. I don't care if I never see another garter belt as long as I live

CISCO: The next video, "Welcome to the Pleasuredome," by Frankie Goes to Hollywood, opens with another '57 Chevy, this time a red convertible

EGBERT: They're racing down the freeway, 100 scale miles per hour

CISCO: They're driving on the wrong side of the road

EGBERT: Do you know what they did? They flopped the negative so they can show this in England. Otherwise, all the Frankie fans in England would drive on the wrong side of the road and kill themselves. They're driving to a klieg light gate that says "Welcome." The Pleasuredome must be just beyond those gates. Now we get to see what the Pleasuredome looks like. I've been waiting ever since Cole-ridge to find out

CISCO: Well, there are a lot of puddles there

EGBERT: Are those garlicky cloves spelling out "Welcome," or are they lights? Maybe it's garlicky to keep the vampires out. Are those girls in the Pleasuredome?

CISCO: Yep, and acrobats and people sitting on stoops, just like in the Astro-dome

EGBERT: And contortionists, jugglers, and caged people. You know, this is different from my own personal vision of the Pleasuredome. Now they're levitating a mummy. Now there are Sumo wrestlers and a bearded lady

CISCO: Those aren't wrestlers. They're Sumo Samose twins joined at the belly. Now the Frankies are entering the tent where Kubla Kahn must live

EGBERT: Now there's some girls climbing into a very small seashell-shaped bathtub

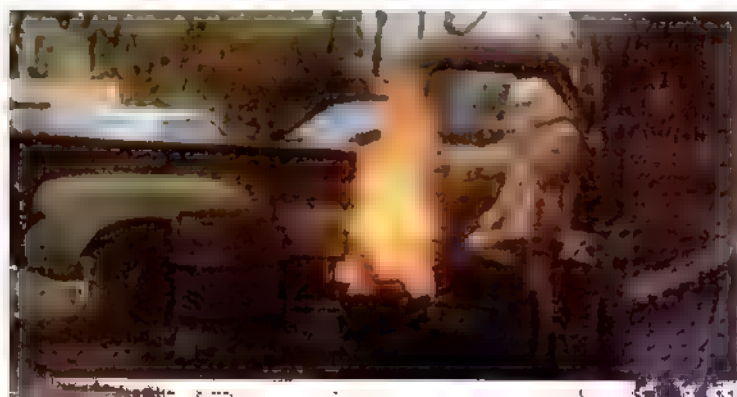
CISCO: One Frankie is climbing in too without taking his combat boots off

EGBERT: Meanwhile, the other Frankies are still looking. They haven't found anything they like in the Pleasuredome. Uh-oh, the Sumo wrestlers have taken a fancy to one of the Frankies and they're dragging him off to the fat camp. Now, Frankie is getting kicked out of the Pleasuredome. What an anti-climax

CISCO: Well, that's all we have time for this month

EGBERT: We'll see you again, "At The Videos"

Gene Cisco and Roger Egbert play bridge with Scott Cohen and Glenn O'Brien



Mark Korb

TELEVISION IS LIFE

I watch "Mike Hammer" whenever it's on TV. I watch Stacy Keach maneuver effortlessly through a world of wealthy, stacked women, with push-up bras and legs that go all the way down to the ground, all eager, all willing, almost a little rich. I sit there and watch and watch, and at the end of each show I feel like going out and murdering somebody. Therein hangs a tale of national neurosis.

Like every American, I live in two worlds. First, there is the boring world of real life. That's the one where some jack-ass radio announcer wakes me up every morning and tells me that it's raining or the freeways are clogged; where I look at myself in the mirror and wonder how I could possibly be so overweight, where my friends are all going out to Rick's Cafe after work to have a few beers, and I can't go because I only have \$1.50 to get me through to Friday. The real world is also the place where my girlfriend is in a bad mood half the time and is getting her hair cut the other half. Finally, that real world's where you pass by the Ferrari dealer and wonder how the hell anyone can afford those prices.

Small wonder that since television came along in the early 1950s and offered an alternative reality, Americans have been avidly watching. TV is, in every sense, a vastly more enjoyable world.

When the TV alternative-reality world began—and six hours a day watching TV for the average American is nothing less than an alternative reality, certainly far more than mere entertainment—it was warm and loving. Mrs. Cleaver baked brownies for Little Beaver when he came from school, Harriet Nelson, in her apron, ran a home so nurturing it made Mother Theresa look like a used-car salesman, Robert Young raised his children with enough love and good sense to turn Richard Speck into a Boy Scout. Those were also the days of adventure and danger on the frontier, when Paladin showed what a man was really made of, James Arness told Kitty that a shoot-out was no place

for a woman, and Clint Walker stood tall at the corral. It was a world more exciting, pleasant, and supportive than the world of bosses and teachers who put you to sleep.

In the '60s, when the situation comedy was king, there were homes with more laughs in 22 minutes than the rest of us had in a lifetime. In real life, we could have our lottery number come up and be shipped off to Vietnam. On TV, we might lose our car keys and have the wacky neighbors drive us to the prom—at the worst.

As reality grew more discouraging, TV became ever brighter. The real world's inflation shrunk the dollar by two thirds, and there was our humiliating exit from Vietnam, not to mention violent confrontations between feminists and men, gasoline lines, and the specter of a decaying society. On TV, there was T&A, car chases without fear of running out of gas, and non-stop yucks in families where everyone trusted each other. In other words, the pain of experiencing your own life became more acute by the hour when compared with what was on TV.

But all of that was only a precursor to what has happened in the last four years of Reagan America. Since 1980, the gap between the real life of Americans and the life of Americans on TV has become unbearable. Consider that from 1980 to late 1982, the United States went through an economic wringer worse than any since the Great Depression.

On TV, however, there has been a boom of staggering proportions. Ten years ago, there was only one show with regular characters who were millionaires—"The Jeffersons." Now, of the 52 continuing series with regular characters, 26 have millionaires as major characters. If you think of television as a series of families, with one family representing each show, that makes half the families in the census of TV land millionaires.

Not only are there the fabulously rich Fwings and the scheming, vicious Car-

ringtons, there are the Falconcrest, Knots Landing, Hot Pursuit, Silver Spoons, Facts of Life, Bill Cosby, Charles in Charge, and Matt Houston families, and on and on. These are rich people, their world one of servants and Rolls convertibles and oil wells and fancy resorts and transatlantic telephone calls, and not an overdue MasterCard bill in sight.

Yes, they do have illegitimate children, secret murder plots, hidden drug addiction, and illicit sex just like the rest of us. But on TV, they have these problems while they ride in Gulfstream II jets, while they write checks for a million dollars, while they dash out to lunch at the petroleum club, while they wonder whether to wear the Dior or the Galanos gown. Not only that, but most of these people never do any work! When was the last time you saw George Jefferson at any of his dry cleaning shops? When was the last time you saw any member of the Carrington family actually reading an oil royalty report, or J. R. Ewing adding up profits on a calculator? Oh, they all pretend to be working. They hire beautiful women to spy on each other. They airily offer \$50 million for a steamship line. They go to dinner.

In the last four years, Reaganomics has led to a prosperity in prime time that makes Kuwait look like Watts. Watching all of this each day, visiting with these rich friends in Dallas, Denver, the Napa Valley, or Park Avenue day after day, and the next day returning to the world of crowded buses and trains, lines at the gas station, and jobs that pay \$4 an hour after deductions is enough to make anyone insane. To watch TV night after night for several hours, to watch it for a few more hours in "day part," where the inhabitants are every bit as rich, is like visiting rich relatives on Park Avenue for a few hours every day and then coming home to a cold-water flat in the South Bronx. The cognitive dissonance between what we see in the alternate reality of TV and the real world of our lives is simply unbearable. To bathe in the warm, scented air of wealth each day and then wonder if you can afford a pound of chopped sirloin after the TV goes off is to feel real anger.

A couple of college girls I know told me that when they get out of school they will have Porsche 928s, chalets in Aspen, and will travel only by private plane. How do they even know these things exist? From Joan Collins and Tom Selleck, of course. The accoutrements of wealth are a part of their daily lives. They just don't happen to own them yet, but they can almost reach out and touch them on TV. When they discover that fewer than one in 100,000 Americans can afford the kinds of things they take for granted as their destiny, they are going to be very surprised. They are already in shock over what starting pay is for a teacher or a banking trainee or an editorial assistant, compared with what their Porsches, chalets, and Falcon 50s cost.

People are growing uneasy. They've been promised the life of a millionaire—everyone around them has it—and they're angry that they don't have it. America has its nose pressed to the glass for six hours a day, and when the glass goes dark

and there is nothing, Americans feel cheated.

The problem does not stop with wealth. It goes on to include bravery. (Yes, goddamit, the people on TV are also all brave.) It also includes that most devastating comparison of all—the people on TV always achieve their goals. In our lives, our most soaring goals are best forgotten while we hope that the cable TV repairman can get here this month. Our wishes for lifetimes of adventure, fulfillment, and creative satisfaction might as well never have been wished. But on TV, at the end of each show, the heroes, the ones we like, have gotten what they wanted out

of it. Over the course of a season, they have been exalted beyond our wildest wishes and fantasies, achieving love, wealth, travel, respect, endorsement of a man's courage and a woman's sensuality. How can the real life of evasion, compromise and defeat possibly compete with that?

In the 1950s, we used to worry that the "revolution of rising expectations" would make the underdeveloped world go mad with anger at the United States. They would see how rich we were and how poor they were, and they would hate us. That fear turned out to be entirely correct. The third world does hate us.

Now, in America, we are undergoing the same process. We see the world on TV. It is so much richer, sexier, and more fulfilling than our world that it makes us mad. But who do we attack? Who do we hate? Neither the world nor the people on TV are real. We can't bomb them or throw rocks through their windows. Their windows are our TV screens.

All we can do is keep watching, keep sinking further into schizophrenia, and pray that one day we will pass through the modern looking glass. Either that or shut the damned thing off.

—Ben Stein



Mark Kostabi



ARE THE BIGFOOT OF RAP

Bigfoot is a pickup truck with monster 10-foot wheels that crushes cars by driving over them. Beastie Boys play monster 10-foot drums, or so it sounds. Beastie Boys began as a joke hardcore band, then a rap band. The joke is, everybody took them seriously, including Beastie Boys.

Article by Scott Cohen

Photography by Josh Cheuse

Beastie Boys eat at White Castle. Beastie Boys wear Pumas with shell tips. Beastie Boys wear lots of leather. In the winter, they wear leather down jackets and hooded bombers. Real Beastie Boys don't wear leather in the summer.

Beastie Boys love the beach. They wear big, floppy plaid bathing suits, like the baggies worn by surfers in the 1960s.

Beastie Boys never carry an umbrella, no matter how hard it rains, but they might put a plastic garbage bag over a box of Mallomar cookies.

Beastie Boys don't use a shoehorn.

If a Beastie Boy needs glasses, he wears Cazal frames.

When a Beastie Boy goes formal, he wears ski pants and suede "playboy" shoes. With most B-boys, it's important that the clothes fit right. With Beastie Boys, 99 percent of the time, the clothes don't fit.

Beastie Boys never look like the people at the clubs, where they are fashion heroes.

Beastie Boys wear the same clothes for weeks.

Beastie Boys like *Head*, the Monkees' movie. They see it at midnight, whenever it's shown. *Sudden Impact* is another big one. Beastie Boys pretty much like any "blacksploitation" movie. All Jerry Lewis movies are a big deal. Beastie Boys do a dance called the Jerry Lewis and their next record will be called *The Jerry Lewis*.

Beastie Boys headquarters are in Beastie Boy Rick Rubin's (Double R) New York University dorm, where he also runs his record company. The room is a studio.



that should have one person living in it, but instead has two and boxes of records all over the place.

Beastie Rick, the Beastie producer and Beastie DJ, wishes his dorm would go co-op before he gets kicked out.

Rick's had more noise complaints than anyone in the history of the dorm. He was the first person in seven years brought before the dorm judiciary committee.

Some of the strangest people visit Rick's room, at all hours of the night. Each one must be announced by the security guard in the lobby.

Security really hates Beastie Boys.

Billy Idol loves Beastie Boys. He puts them right up there with Elvis and the Beatles.

Beastie Boys love professional wrestling. Beastie Boys watch wrestling on TV to keep abreast of what's happening in America. Any time in the course of a day that a Beastie Boy isn't talking about music or soap operas, he's talking about wrestling.

Beastie Boys consider themselves cultured.

"Cey" and "Shadi" are Beastie Boys' favorite artists.

When Beastie Boys go to a good restaurant, they go to Beefsteak Charlie's. It might be too expensive to take a girl to, but if they get a girl to pay for them, they ask to go to Beefsteak's.



If we opened a Beastie Boy refrigerator, we'd find peanut butter and Marshmallow Fluff next to a bag of granola, fresh orange juice, Gatorade, Chef Boy-Ar-Dee ravioli (red can), R-ce-a-Roni but no peas. Beastie Boys don't eat peas.

Inside a Beastie Boy wallet are the phone numbers of lots of girls, not much money and no credit cards.

If a girl wants a Beastie Boy to like her, she's got to be cool and not talk too much. Beastie Boys like young, pretty, new-wavey looking girls.

Beastie Boys like Skoobie's, a club for minors in Seattle with two thousand 15-, 16- and 17-year-old girls all thinking they are Madonna.

Beastie Boys don't use after-shave.

Beastie Boys don't have plants or pets.

A smashing evening for Beastie Boys is going out to eat at a McDonald's, then hanging out at a club like Skoobie's, talking to lots of girls, dancing to records that they like—which is hard to do because it's hard to find a club that plays records that they like—going out to eat again and going home, hopefully not alone.

If someone was to make a movie of the Beastie Boys' life story, Beastie Boys would like to be played by professional wrestlers, like Rowdy Roddy Piper.

If Beastie Boys were rich, they would do what they're doing now, which is nothing. Beastie Boys are pretty happy. They don't have real jobs. Beastie Boys hang out all night, play records, make music and screw around all the time.



10



Clockwise from left: bassist Adam Yauch, DJ Rick Double R, guitarist King Ad Rock, Beastie Boys with Mike D, holding box

ONCE IS ENOUGH: ROCK'S ONE-HIT WONDERS

They came,
they saw,
they conquered,
they disappeared.

Article by Jam'e Malinowski

Some performers are great, have careers that last 10 or 15 years, and end up with digitally tuned recordings of their complete works sold in \$500 sets. Other performers are good, last a couple of years, and may discover in middle age that they can finance their kid's braces by playing nostalgic concerts. Then there are performers who were terribly talented and had no luck, or who were just terrible and had nothing but luck, who briefly owned a piece of the Top 40 before vanishing into oldie land. They are One Hit Wonders, and we offer this tribute in their memory.

1954

On Christmas Eve, a 25-year-old R&B singer, sitting backstage at the Houston City Auditorium, lost a game of Russian roulette to his .32 caliber revolver. Johnny Ace's unfortunate demise, however, didn't impede the release of his new record, "Pledging My Love," which surprised everyone by scaling halfway up the Top 40. The music industry then offered Johnny its highest tribute and rushed out a bunch of records that attempted to cash in on his death, including "Why, Johnny, Why," "Johnny Has Gone," and "Johnny's Still Singing." Johnny wasn't, but the cash register was.



1955

The first five million-selling rock 'n' roll records were by Bill Haley (two), Pat Boone (two), and Fats Domino. The sixth, "Seventeen," was by Boyd Bennett and the Rockets. Rock's first golden one-hit wonder is memorable for lyrics like "Seventeen Hot rod queen/Purriest gal I've ever seen," for having a vocalist named Big Moe, and for wasting one of the best names in rock 'n' roll history. Today, Bennett reportedly sells gauze in Texas, which is what happens when the follow-up to your hit is called "My Boy Flat Top."

1956

On November 21, 1955, the strapped-for-cash head of Sun records, Sam Phillips, received \$35,000 from RCA in exchange for Elvis Presley's contract. Phillips had concluded that, while audiences screamed for El-



vis, they didn't buy his records. Presley's first release had sold 20,000 copies, his second, 5,000, and there was no reason to believe this wasn't a trend. Besides, Sun had other singers, notably Carl Perkins. So you have to wonder how Phillips felt when he read *Billboard* the following March and saw Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes" sitting in second place, right behind a number called "Heartbreak Hotel" by you know who.

Perkins' one-hit rock 'n' roll career ended when he wrecked his car in Delaware enroute to do "The Ed Sullivan Show." After his convalescence, he devoted himself to country music. Presley had 107 Top 40 hits.

1957

There are seven one-hit wonders named Harris: Betty, Eddie, Emmylou, Major, Richard, Rolf, and Thurston. Why didn't "Didn't We?" have the chance to follow up "MacArthur Park" for Richard? Why couldn't Rolf build on "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport"? Why did Eddie think he could launch a career with a saxophone version of "Exodus"? Why has no one named Harris ever had a second hit? These are deep mysteries. (There's also a one-hit wonder named Harrison, Wilbert, with the immortal "Kansas City.")

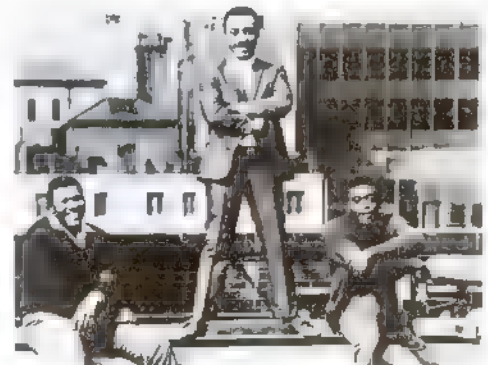
The best of Harris' hits is Thurston's "Itty Bitty Pretty One," because of his integrity. With rock 'n' roll under attack as meaningless, inarticulate and addled, Thurston forthrightly released a record whose lyrics consist largely of "Mm mm m-muh mm." Thurston, wherever you are, this Bud's for you.

The Bobbettes, five girls from P.S. 109 in Harlem, hit number five with a snappy song about their principal, "Mr. Lee," which featured world-class hiccupping. The follow-up was "I Shot Mr. Lee." It was D.O.A.

1958

Charles Patrick, lead singer of the Monotones, was writing a song called "Book of Love," when over the radio came "You'll wonder where the yellow went/When you brush your teeth with Pepsodent." Patrick immediately wondered, wondered who, who, who wrote the Book of Love, and a classic was born. The Monotones' follow-up was "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," which perhaps explains where they went.

The Royal Teens would be just another group whose hit ("Short Shorts") cashed in on a teen fashion preference, except that one member, Al Kooper, went on to form Blood, Sweat and Tears and another, Bob Gaudio, was asked by Frankie Castelluccio, the lead singer of the Four Lovers, to fill a vacancy in the band. Gaudio became the fourth Lover, Castelluccio became Valli,



Lovers became Seasons, and all of them became rich

- Dozens of movie themes dot the charts during the rock era, but the first that reached for the top was "The Blob," by the Five Bobs, which hit number 33. Actually, there weren't five blobs, just one, named Bernie Nee, who played all the parts

1960

- In L.A., an ad hoc gang of musicians got drunk in a studio and cut "Aiy Oop," a pale facsimile of a Coasters' novelty record. The newly dubbed Hollywood Argyles saw the record reach number one

Two years later, Argyles' vocalist Gary Paxton found himself in similar circumstances, doing another novelty song. Bobby 'Boris' Pickett's "Monster Mash" became a hit on two occasions, in '62 and '73. By the way, "Monster Mash" didn't set a record for a reentry hit. That belongs to a song so incomprehensible that the record company thought it necessary to take the unusual step of explaining right on the label what the song means. "The wondrous story of a little boy who, unknowingly, gave the greatest gift of all on a starry night long ago in history, which began the greatest story ever told," 20th Century Fox wrote in tiny type next to the big 45 hole. Yes, we're talking about the inscrutable "Little Drummer Boy," by the Harry Simeone Chorale, which found its way into the Top 40 every year from 1958 to 1962

- Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs hit number one with "Stay," a song which, at about a minute and a half, is perhaps the shortest hit in rock history. Now think about the Zodiacs: one hit, lasting ninety seconds, called "Stay." I wonder if Maurice sees the humor in it

1961

- With "Daddy's Home," Shep and the Limelites became the last of doo wop's one-hit wonders. The group remained a regional favorite until 1970, when Shep was found beaten to death on the Long Island Expressway.
- Producer Huey Meaux's string of one-hit wonders included Joe Barry's "I'm a Fool to Care," Barbara Lynn's "You'll Lose a Good Thing," and Date and Grace's "I'm Leavin' It Up to You." Meaux was on the verge of significance when he gave a teenage girl a lift from Houston to a D.J.'s convention in Nashville. She turned out to be a prostitute and a diarist, and after the feds read her memoirs, Huey did 14 months

1962

- Johnny Otis, the influential producer, bandleader, and impresario, had 11 R&B hits before he made his lone appearance on the Top 40 with "Willie and the Hand Jive." During his career, Otis introduced innumerable new acts, one of whom was Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. Ballard had eight Top 40 hits, but is best known for writing "The Twist" for Chubby Checker. The Twist craze inspired many variations including that of Billy Joe and the Checkmates, who based their "Percolator Twist" on a Maxwell House commercial (Bupa Bupa Bup Bup)

1963

- The immortal "Leader of the Pack" was the object of a hit parody called "Leader of the Laundromat," which was performed by a studio group called the Detergents. The vocalist was Ron Dante, who later sang for the definitive studio group, the Archies. The record was produced by Barry Manilow

- "Wipe Out," by The Surfaris, featuring drums and hysterical laugh, was the first song to emerge from California's sand and gasoline culture. It was followed by the Rip Chords' "Hey Little Cobra," Ronny and the Daytonas' "G.I.O.," and The Trashmen's "Surfin' Bird," with its famous "Papa Oom Mow Mow," which a judge later determined was hijacked from a group called The Livingtons.

1964

- The last of the Elvoids appeared in '64. The version from '62, Bruce Channel, didn't sing like Elvis, but showed rockabilly roots by amiably baying "Hey Baby!" over the harmonica playing of Deibert McClinton, whose "Giving It Up for Your Love" made him a one-hit wonder 18 years later. But '64's entry, "Suspicion," by Terry Stafford, really sounded like Elvis. Unfortunately for Terry, the King was in the midst of releasing 10 go-nowhere songs, including "Do the Clam," which left Terry peddling Elvis stock in a bear market.

- The big news of '64 was the British invasion. So hot were The Beatles that nearly every British group charted a string of hits. However, the Honeycombs, who got their name from their girl drummer's nickname (Honey) and her occupation (hairstylist, in which she used a . . . Get it?), had only one hit with "Have I the Right?"

1965

- Many great show biz careers were launched with protest songs, none of which matched the vehemence of Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction." Barry made a lot of rude observations about "bodies floatin'" and "the whole world in a grave," but his undoing came when he sang "You may leave here for four days in space/But when you return it's the same old place." When you piss on the space program, pal, you've gone too far. Still, he did better than The Spokesmen, whose answer, "Dawn of Correction," managed to occupy space on the charts for a whole week.

1966

- The Year of the Garage Bands: The Bobby Fuller Four might have had a long career after "I Fought the Law," but then Bobby asphyxiated himself in his garage. The Standells ("Dirty Water") and The Seeds ("Pushin' Too Hard") were supposed to be America's answer to the Stones, but like most musical answers, they'd gotten the question wrong. The Leaves got their name when one band member greeted another with "What's happenin'?", and received the reply "The leaves are happenin'." They had a hit with a maundering tribute to adultery and murder called "Hey Joe." People hearing "Black is Black" thought Los Bravos was a tough Tex-Mex band. Actually, they were from Spain, and their follow-up, "Going Nowhere," was prophetic.

Arguably, the best garage band was ? and the Mysterians, whose "96 Tears" is garagia at its best. ?'s vocals are anguished, petulant, and hostile, just the way spurned teenage swains should sound. His name was Rudy Martinez. The group's follow-up reached number 22; then they broke up. The Mysterians went on to lay tracks on bubble gum records

1967

- Quickly now, what's the difference between Music Machine ("Tax, Talk"), Music Explosion ("Little Bit o' Soul"), and Syndicate of Sound ("Little Girl," as in "Hey little girl, you don't hafta hide nothin' no more")? Right! All the members of Music Machine always wore black leather. Outside that, they all wanted to be The Box Tops





1968

• Dance crazes create one-hit wonders: Cliff Nobles' "The Horse," Van McCoy's "The Hustle," Cannibal and the Headhunters' "Land of a Thousand Dances," and the Capitols' "Cool Jerk." One of the best of this genre was Human Beinz' "Nobody But Me," in which the singer posits "No no, No, No no, No-no-no, No, No-no-no, No, No no-no, No-no-no!" then contends "Nobody can do the Shingaling like I do/Nobody can do the Snake," and so on, through the Boogaloo, the Philly Dog, and the Twist. More than a few of us who tried to slide through our teens with one all-purpose dance step were exposed by this record.

1969

• Thunderclap Newman's "Something in the Air" tried to capitalize on the student rebel spirit of the times, but when it advised to "Send out for guns and ammo," it went a little overboard. Still, it was just the sort of thing you'd like playing as you stormed the dean's office.

• A studio group called Steam recorded the eminently singable, danceable, "Na Na, Hey Hey, Kiss Him Goodbye," which enjoyed a resurgence after White Sox fans took to singing it a few years ago. Steam, meanwhile, evaporated.

• "The Worst That Could Happen," by The Brooklyn Bridge, was a turgid song about a guy whose girl is marrying someone else, after he resisted marrying her himself. The lyric is the embodiment of self-pity and insincerity ("I don't really blame you for having a dream of your own . . . A woman like you needs a house and a home"), and you just know this guy's already figured out how to use this story to pick up chicks.

• The ultimate one-hit wonder spent six weeks at number one, and was performed by a duo no one ever heard from before or since. It's Zager and Evans' "In the Year 2525," and it's a total embarrassment. This preposterous song came equipped with a Latin subtitle (Exordium & Terminus), and a lyric that featured lines like "(Man) has taken everything this old earth can yield, and he ain't put back nothin', Wo-o-oh." Wo-o-oh indeed. In the year 2525, if man is still alive, if woman can survive, they better not hear this record, or they may not realize what a golden era this was.

1970

• "The Rapper," by The Jaggerz, warns a girl not to be seduced by a smooth-talker ("Rap, rap, rap, you know what he's after"). However, The Jaggerz come across like a bunch of rejected, resentful snots. With them as the alternative, it's no contest: being seduced by a glib

charmer seems downright appealing. "The Rapper" reprised a theme that appeared in 1965, when Bob Kuban and the In-Men did "The Cheater" ("Look out for the cheater/ Make way for the foolhardy clown"). Again, this song was so bouncy that it made the Cheater sound like a real fun guy. By the way, did any other rock song ever use the word 'foolhardy'?

1972

• A group called Blue Haze spent seven weeks on the charts with "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Blue Haze then waited away, joining such other colorful one-hit wonders as Cilla Black, Jeanne Black, Blue Cheer, Blue Jays, Blues Image, Blues Magoos, Shades of Blue, Al Brown, Arthur Brown, Boots Brown, Buster Brown, Chuck Brown, Nappy Brown, Polly Brown, Roy Brown, Shirley Brown, Frida Pink, Garland Green, Norman Greenbaum, Lorne Greene, Pink Lady, Silver, White Plains, Tony Joe White, The Pastels, and Rosie and the Originals.

1973

• It's strange, but with the exception of Fats Domino, New Orleans seems capable of producing nothing but one-hit wonders. Dr. John's "Right Place, Wrong Time" was only the latest in a series that included Frankie Ford's "Sea Cruise," Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is," Bobby Marchan's "There's Something on Your Mind," Chris Kenner's "I Like It Like That," Ernie K-Doe's "Mother-in-Law," Joe Jones' "You Talk Too Much," and Huey "Piano" Smith's immortal "Don't You Just Know It." Then again, the Battle of New Orleans was fought a couple of weeks after the War of 1812 ended.

1974

• An English studio group called First Class hit the top 10 with "Beach Baby," which featured the lyric "Beach Baby, give me your hand/Give me something that I can remember." Most guys would settle for a photograph.

1975

• When the sexual revolution was being fomented, rock n' roll was there, pushing the troops over the barricades. They didn't take long to fall. What were the fruits of this victory? Sex went pop. Jay Ferguson got to say that he and his girlfriend made love on "Thunder Island." Peter McCann got to ask "Do You Want to Make Love, or Do You Just Want to Fool Around?" Dean Friedman got to mention that "Ariel" wasn't wearing a bra. The Starland Vocal Band got to record "Afternoon Delight," about the joys of daylight sex. Sammy Johns

got to sing about having a sexual encounter with a hitchhiker in his "Chevy Van." Alan O'Day got to record "Undercover Angel," which is about jerking off to a Farrah Fawcett poster.

1977

• Some one-hit wonders of the '70s can be described as drags: Morris Albert's mopey "Feelings," Dan Hill's lamebrained "Sometimes When We Touch" ("... the honesty's too much" . . . What?), and Debby Boone's champion "You Light Up My Life," which she says she's singing to God. Well, fine, but does she think God wanted her to be such a drag?

1979

• K.C. dumped the Sunshine band and teamed with Teri DeSario to cover Barbara Mason's 1965 hit, "Yes, I'm Ready." This song features one of the most preposterous lyrics in rock history, when Teri innocently-but-passionately says "I don't even know how to hold your hand, but I'm ready to learn." The only way this makes sense is if Teri's been in an automobile accident, and K.C.'s her physical therapist.

The 1980s

During the '70s, albums replaced singles as the primary music product, and Top 40 radio declined, reducing the number and quality of one-hit wonders. Later, the rise of MTV and the return of the Top 40 format have renewed the possibility that one-hit wonders will return in abundance. Still, it's more likely that an act will have a hit, hang around on MTV, get some pay on a bum-oriented station, and completely wreck the ways we recognize one-hit wonders. We may have to develop new standards of insignificance, and think less about one-hit wonders than about flashes in the pan. Like Human League, Flock of Seagulls, The Knack, Men at Work, and Christopher Cross.

Still, there are true one-hit wonders out there. Michael Sembello's "Maniac," Rockwell's "Somebody's Watching Me" and Nena's "99 Luftballons" are perfect examples. Of course, any of these guys could end up with a long career, but if it happened to Boyd Bennett and the Rockets, it can happen to anyone.

(Pg. 56, left): The youthful face of Johnny Ace; (top) The Royal Teens, who cashed in on short shorts and later a Nair commercial; (bottom) Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs. (Pg. 57): Barry McGuire emerges after the eve of destruction. (Pg. 58, top): Thunderclap Newman, with a rebel yell, (bottom) The Brooklyn Bridge sit on it.

Photographs from Michael Ochs Archives



NEW SOUNDS

His bizarre music/stage productions have been popular across Canada. But is Michel Lemieux ready for the U.S.? Is the U.S. ready for Michel Lemieux?

Column by John Schaefer

A beam of light sweeps across the darkened stage, picking out a stack of overlapping triangles. Or maybe they're squares. There's something strange going on; the shapes seem to be moving. Music comes up, a funky bass-and-drum riff with synthesizers layered on top. The shapes are *definitely* moving now. The light beamed on them is changing color and pattern; as the music progresses, the shapes on the stage begin to swirl around. It's like a three-dimensional kaleidoscope.

The audience is completely baffled just what the hell are they looking at? One shape moves in a way that's almost familiar. A murmur from the crowd—some people are catching on. The music swells—then ends; the lights come up. On stage, Michel Lemieux nods to the applauding audience. He can't bow because on his arms, chest and legs he's wearing huge triangles.

From the hypnotic geometry of the show's opening to its rock-opera vocal closing, Lemieux's *Solide Salad* is full of surprises. The multi-media program has sold out halls across his native Canada, and was brought to the United States for the first time last spring. Backstage at the Joyce Theater in New York City, Lemieux (pronounced Luh-myuh) reflects on his career at the ripe old age of 25.

"When I was 10 years old, I was doing puppet shows in my room for my parents, just like everybody else. What I'm doing now isn't really any different—it's like playing in my room. But at the same time, there's sexuality, and ambiguity. And humor."

Lemieux is in fact a very physical performer: During his 90-minute show he climbs up, jumps over or hides behind the various props on stage. He sings in English and French, clowns,

and occasionally plays a small keyboard to accompany taped music. If there's any "meaning" to it all, only Lemieux knows—and he ain't telling. "I like to offer choices; I have an idea behind everything in the show, but there's more than one interpretation of it. And my interpretation isn't necessarily better than anyone else's."

His combination of live and prerecorded music, stage performance, visual projections, humor and high tech has sparked almost universal comparison to Laurie Anderson, whose albums and huge stage productions epitomize what's called "performance art."

What a rotten label that is, but overlooking the fact that "performance art" tells you nothing about the music, Lemieux doesn't worry about such comparison. "In Canada, everyone identified me with Laurie Anderson. So when I saw her for the first time last summer, I was expecting a kind of guru, you know? But it was so different." Lemieux's performances have prompted other bizarre parallels. One New York paper described *Solide Salad* as "hi-tech vaudeville."

"An old German guy once told me that my show reminded him of the German cabaret before the war," Lemieux says. "That's a good image for me, because there's a lot of humor in what I do, and I'm not afraid of doing entertainment. Cabaret and vaudeville are a bit like that."

Technology certainly plays an important role in *Solide Salad*, from mixing the music to coordinating the visual effects. "Technology is all around us," Lemieux says. "Everyone has home computers or videocassettes now, so we just have to live with it." But whereas Laurie Anderson takes an ironic stance by using the latest studio gadgetry and electronic equipment and at the same time stepping back and saying, wait a minute, all this high-tech stuff isn't as great as it seems, Lemieux enjoys using what's available. That includes Oscar, a small robot that joins Lemieux on stage at one point. "Technology isn't like a big monster that'll eat us if we don't watch it. The little robot is really a symbol of that; it's just a little pet that appears and you can have fun with."

Lemieux still lives in Montreal, where he created *Solide Salad* last year. His performances there are so well-received that he played Montreal's Spectrum for nearly a month. "It was the first time anyone did a long-term gig there," he says. "For me, it's great to be in Montreal. It's small, but it's big enough to have everything. If I want a costume, there are 50 people who can make it. Of course, here in New York, you could have 1,000 people, but you could never know them all. In Montreal, I know each of them."



Lemieux is currently on the road in France (he's played frequently in Europe), and will then go to Quebec to record his first album (*TransCanada*). The video for his song "Romantic Complications" receives regular airplay on Canada's music video channel, and MTV is interested in his work.

But can Lemieux build a following in the U.S.? His success in Canada, where, God bless 'em, the national pastime is drinking beer and the national religion is hockey, proves that he can attract very different groups of people. In the French-speaking areas of eastern Canada, Lemieux explains, you find the "Latin blood—they're really like Italians: they applaud, they shout." But in western Canada, he claims, the people are more Anglo-Saxon. "They're very straight, like the British. More so than here in the U.S., because you seem to have lost that. But the Western Canadians haven't. So they're supposed to be cold and reserved, and everybody was saying, you're going to have trouble. But we had no trouble, the people were really warm." In a conservative city like Calgary—"it's like our version of Dallas," Lemieux quips, "you know real cowboy stuff!"—*Solide Salad* was enthusiastically received.

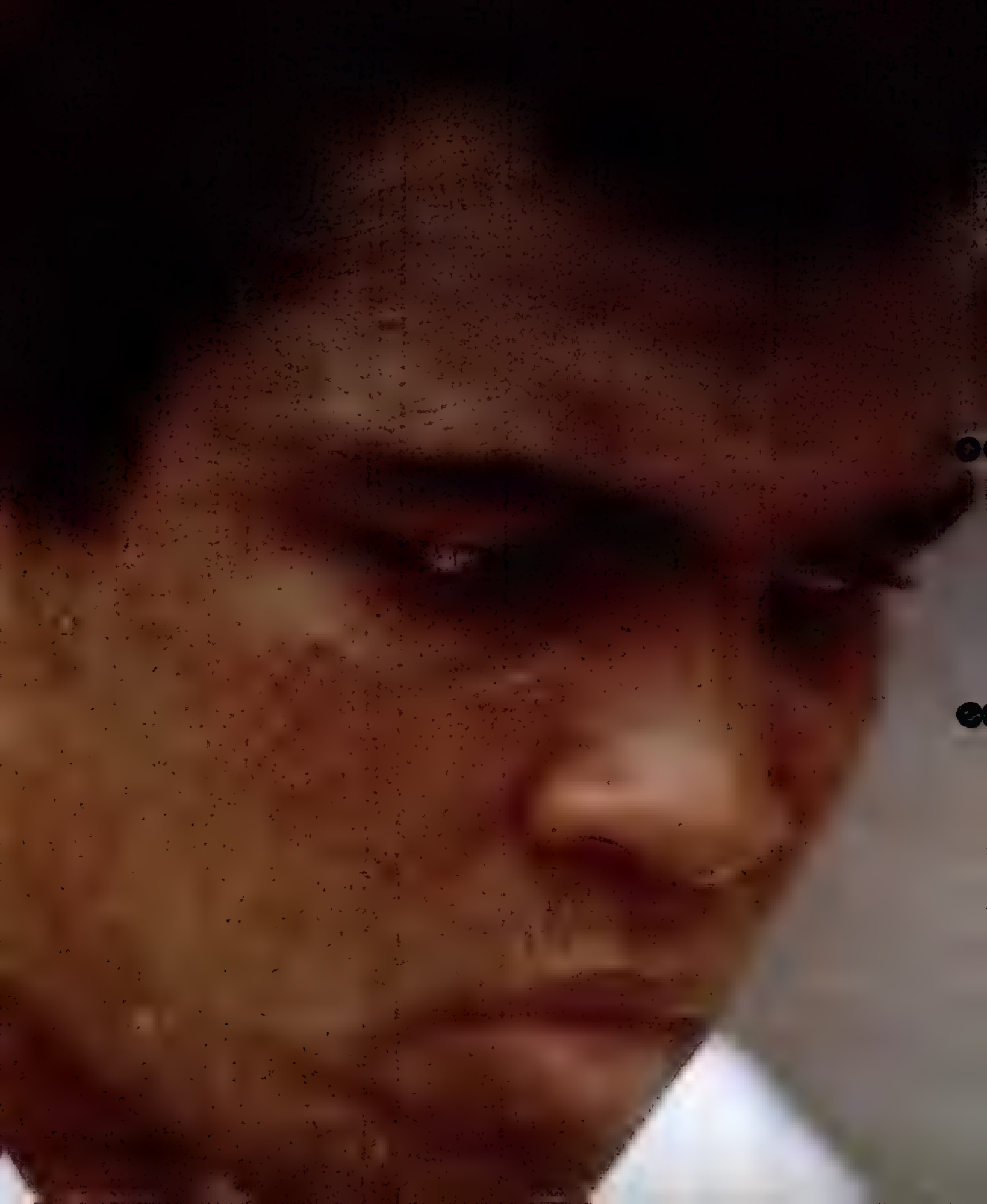
About the music itself, Lemieux says, "It varies, but when there's a beat, it's usually funk. It's important for me to mix the funky beat with the more European-style melodies, because my voice is a bit operatic."

Lemieux's music is mostly a blend of New York-style funk, Motown-brand R&B and new wave. His press people claim there are also classical influences and even a bit of "minimalism" à la Philip Glass or Steve Reich, but quite frankly I don't hear it. The comparisons with Laurie Anderson don't hold up too well, either. Anderson's music is

finely wrought, incorporating many styles—from new wave to Korean court music—and the subtle irony of her performances makes them multidimensional. There's often a real contrast between what's going on at the surface and what's being implied by Anderson's frequent stories or visual effects.

Lemieux's music is generally pleasant, though uneven in quality. And his performance lacks the depth of Laurie Anderson's. But then, Lemieux's *Solide Salad* doesn't set out to be anything more than it is—a witty, clever mix of aural and visual art, and a lot of fun. *Solide Salad* has enough going on in it to appeal to many tastes, and that, says Lemieux, is why it's so popular in Canada. "It's a varied audience; they all like the show, but they don't like the same things in it. They make their own message... they make their own show somehow. It's just a proposition, and they interpret it however they like. And sometimes someone will come up to me with a really wild interpretation, and the next couple of nights, I'll think about that during the show, and it may change my own approach to it."

Stage right stands Michel Lemieux. This time, his costume actually consists of recognizable articles of clothing. From his left emerges a gleaming, dog-shaped robot. It rolls across the stage, Lemieux's face registers surprise, then naive delight. As he rocks through the next song, to the sounds of a drum machine and the obligatory female chorus, his electronic pet follows him around the stage. Lemieux is singing into a wireless mike that circles his neck like a collar, and curves up toward his mouth like an inverted elephant's trunk. He looks almost as alien as the gizmo rolling after him. A high-tech boy and his dog.



ALI

An intimate look at a retired champion

Article by Harold Conrad

Muhammad Ali is sitting behind a huge mahogany desk in the study of his baroque mansion in Hancock Park, the quiet, old-money section of Los Angeles. He is writing on letterhead stationery, the pen moving ever so slowly. He never was a fast writer. I've known him for 25 years, but I hadn't seen him for a couple. I've talked to him on the phone several times, and it was painful to listen to him. He knew what he wanted to say, but it came out in an inaudible mish-mash of scrambled syntax.

Now, as I'm looking at him, I'm delighted to find that his face hasn't changed much. The cheeks are a little chubby; he's more than twenty pounds overweight. Those eyes that once flashed mischief and excitement now have a somber look. But when he gives you a rare old Ali smile, his handsome kisser still lights up a room.

Marge Thomas, his secretary, a businesslike woman, sits nearby. Every few minutes Ali looks up and gives her some reminder notes, which she jots



Curtis J. Miller/Corbis 5

down. He is wearing a white, custom-made shirt, a conservative tie, and he looks like a bank president or a black industrial tycoon. He has a dignity about him which I may have overlooked in his earlier years when I saw him as a smart-assed kid fighter. Miss Thomas picks up her notebook and goes off to her office to do some typing.

Muhammad points to a box at his feet, a three-by-three carton overflowing with mail. Slow calculations seem to precede his moves. "See this?" he says. "I get more mail now than when I was fighting. There's letters from more than 40 different countries. I answer as many as I can personally. The rest are shipped to Chicago, where they are put in a computer."

Many of the letters are from well-wishers and those offering sympathy. The rumors that Muhammad Ali had brain damage, and further conjecture that he was not going for this world, have spread around the globe.

Just before that last miserable fight of Ali's career, a New York brain specialist, who had done a brain scan on Muhammad, told me in the Bahamas that he had detected no damage. But whatever the diagnosis, Ali does have problems that he can't hide in public. Had it been someone else, it probably wouldn't have been so obvious. But with public figures, you usually retain your best image of the man—and what an image Ali had—a dynamic, graceful whirlwind, with quick tongue and laughing eyes. Now, when he's seen in public, the contrast is startling. He's slow moving (at the Marvin Hagler-Thomas Hearn fight in Las Vegas he was seen being carefully led by the arm through the crowd by a bodyguard), with a somewhat vacant look and slurred speech.

"Level with me," I say. "What is your medical condition?"

"I had at least half-a-dozen brain scans," he answers, "and not one showed any brain damage. It's my vocal chords. I'm taking therapy. They tell me it could get better." Then he does some yodeling to demonstrate the therapy method. But there is no resonance to his voice.

"I worry about it," he says, "but I know I ain't got no brain damage. I was in Las Vegas Thursday, New York Friday, back here last night, making speeches takin' to people. I'm movin' around more now than when I was fightin'. You goin' to prison with me today, two prisons. Those poor suckers in jail, stuck away. They need help. They need friends. I go to hospitals, old folks' homes, unfortunate people, forgotten. That's what I dedicated my life to, that and my religion."

Veronica, Ali's third wife, walks into the study, a vision in a white angora coat. She is a deep contrast to

his first two wives. Sonji, number one, was pert, vivacious, and kind of a party girl. Number two, Khalilah (formerly Belinda), was a take-charge, striking-looking Amazon, and a dedicated Muslim. Veronica is stylish and urbane and always the perfect lady. She dresses and looks like a movie star. The acceptance of Veronica indicates one of the trends the Muslim have followed, from the hard right to a more liberal stance.

Ali, aged 22, married Sonji a few months before the second Liston bout. He had spent most of his youth in the gym and she was his first real romance. I doubt that he had ever been properly laid. Sonji was sexy. He was crazy about her. As she sat with my wife at the Liston fight, Sonji told her she had no intention of adhering to the Muslim customs and would not stop using makeup and wearing short dresses. "Ali loves me and he'll let me do whatever makes me happy." The Muslims broke up the marriage a few months later.

Not long after, Sonji called me. She wanted a ticket to the Ali-Patterson fight I was working on in Las Vegas. "Up real close," she said. "If he sees me, I know he'll want me back." It never happened.

Back in the study, Veronica Ali is standing by the fireplace. Ali isn't looking at her; instead, he's looking at me with pride, enjoying my appreciation of her beauty. She sticks a garden a in her sleek, black hair. "How about this?" she asks me. "I'm auditioning for a commercial. It has a Hawaiian motif."

"Great," I tell her. "You're a cinch to get the job."

She kisses Muhammad affectionately, and after she leaves, I bring up Sonji. "Ever think about her?" I ask.

He gives me a noncommittal shrug, but I notice his somber eyes light up. "Sonji was a good kid," he says.

"After you broke up with her, I remember you carried a torch bright enough to light up Pittsburgh," I tell him. "How you know that?" he asks.

I can't help but feel that, since he has forgotten so much, what he is really saying is: "How did you remember?" I ask him to spell Sonji's name, and he spells it wrong.

A few minutes later, Ali excuses himself and goes into an anteroom. I peek in. He is kneeling on a prayer rug, praying to Allah. He does this five times a day. When he returns to the study, I ask him about his finances. "People say you're broke."

"Broke?" he says clearly. "People say stupid things. I ain't broke. I got about four million invested. I know, I should have 20 million, but I'm alright. Nets me about 30 thousand a month before taxes."

Seeing that prayer rug reminds me of at least another million I know he should have had. In the early '70s,

when he was really rolling, he gave a group a million dollars to handle his business, invest his money and pay his taxes. The combine consisted of three men: a disbarred lawyer, an unfrocked Muslim minister, and a little Greek hustler. Anybody in his right mind wouldn't cash a two-dollar check for any one of the guys. Gene K. Roy, now an executive at the Dunes Hotel and one of Ali's closest white friends, tried to talk him out of the deal, but he didn't listen and gave the million to the unholy trio.

Ali is truly a decent man, and decent men have a naive faith in mankind. He doesn't see evil in anyone. He does have this Allah-like attitude.

At the first meeting of the board, the trio voted each other new Cadillacs with everything on them. A few months later, Ali came to New York for his third fight with Kenny Norton. I hid him at my West Side apartment for a few days before the fight, to keep the pressure off him.

Two days before the fight, the unholy three came to the apartment to see him. The Greek was carrying a prayer rug. He unfurled it. "This is a sample of the prayer rug we're going to manufacture," he told Ali. "Make a fortune." Ali said, "Really?" When he moved out of my apartment he left the prayer rug behind.

A few weeks later, the Greek went to Las Vegas and blew a fortune of Ali's money. Muhammad recouped very little of his million, and I own a prayer rug that cost him thousands. That's all he had to show for his money. It has to be the most expensive prayer rug in the world. A rug just like it would be worth about 50 bucks.

But around Ali the strange was commonplace and great shifts occurred in an instant. In one era, Ali refused to be inducted into the Army or submit for the Vietnam draft, which made him a hero to the liberals and a scourge to hard-hat Republicans. Now he supports Ronald Reagan, having endorsed him in the last election.

I ask Muhammad about his politics. "With your background and your history, how in hell did you wind up supporting Reagan?"

He gives me an intentional mush-mouth this time and it sounds something like, "He good for the economy." He seems embarrassed, I say to myself, *They used this guy again.*

"Don't you remember what happened with Reagan?" I ask.

"No."

Back in 1970, when Ali's appeal on the Vietnam draft was before the Supreme Court (he ultimately won, 9-0), I went to 22 states trying to get him a license for the

first Frazier fight - and kept getting turned down. But the California boxing commission had a change of heart. One of its members told me he thought he could get enough votes to swing it. Reagan, who was then governor, got wind of it and said: "Forget it. That draft-dodger will never fight in my state."

Reagan said that?" Ali asks.

"Yes, he did," I say.

Ali comes right back with, "But he didn't say 'nigger draft dodger,'" and there is a raspy chuckle.

Dissolve some 13 years into the past. I'm in Dublin promoting the Ali-Bue Lewis fight there. My neighbor on the top floor of the old Gresham Hotel is none other than Ronald Reagan. With him is his young son Ronnie, who is then about 12. He's a nice, polite little guy and he's crazy about Ali.

One afternoon when young Ronnie is trailing around Ali, I ask the kid if he would like to have his picture taken with the champ. "Oh, could I? Thank you, Mr. Conrad. That would be wonderful." Then I say, "I'm going to give your old man a couple of tickets so he can take you to see the fight." Now he's delirious.

The next day, as I'm walking across the hotel lobby, I see Reagan coming toward me. He stops me and says, "Gee. I don't know how to thank you. You've made this trip for little Ronnie. And thanks for the fight tickets. Unfortunately, I'm busy that night, but I'll have one of my security men take Ron." Then he says "gee" again and he gives me his sincere, humble look, and adds, "Isn't that Ali wonderful?" My eyebrows go up as I remember what this man told his athletic commission two years before, but I don't think he ever got the significance.

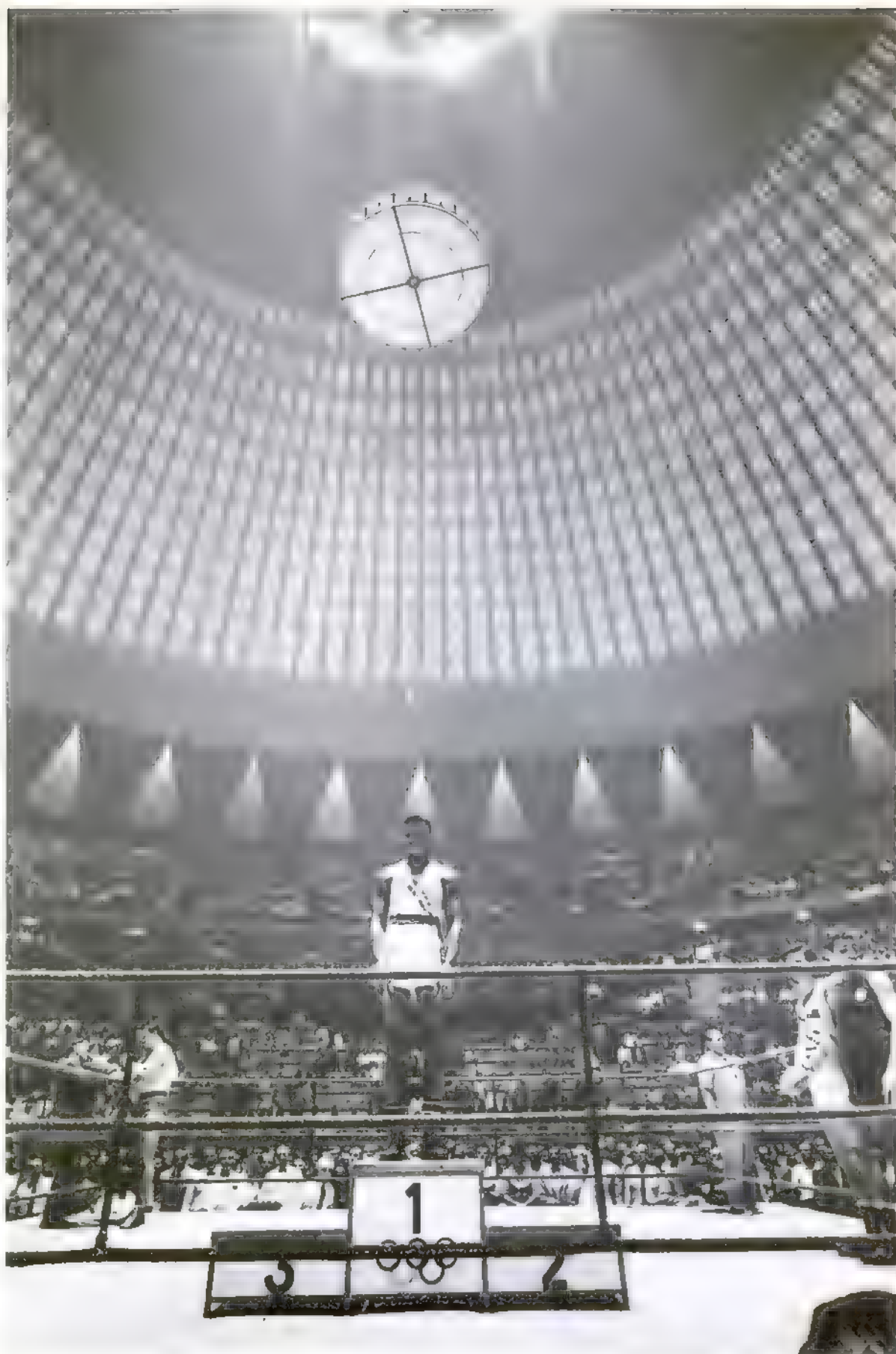
Dissolve back to Ali's study. "Did you know that this is the twentieth anniversary of Malcolm X's death?" I ask.

Yeah, I know that," he says coldly.

"You were very close to him at one time. What happened?"

"Got nothing to say," Ali mutters.

I was hoping he could add something to my experience with Malcolm. During the winter of 1964, in Miami Beach, Ali was in his last ten days of training for his first title shot against Sonny Liston. I'm coordinating the live gate and closed circuit network for the fight. We have just buried Cassius Clay, Jr. He is now Muhammad Ali, but there are conflicting rumors about his status as a Black Mus-



Muhammad Ali in the ring, 1964. Photo by Marvin Newman/Scars Illustration



I'm. He neither affirms nor denies them.

Bill MacDonald, the promoter of the "live" fight at the Miami Beach Convention Center, calls me in. "I don't believe this," he says, "but it's got to be true. He's had that Malcolm X guy hanging around his camp for weeks."

I can see what is brewing in his mind. "So what?" I ask.

"So what!" he screams. "Don't you understand? This is the deep south. We have segregation here. I can't promote a fight with a guy who thinks we're white devils!"

"I'm sure Cassius doesn't think that," I say.

"That's what Malcolm X preaches and that's what he's teaching the kid. I'm calling off the fight."

"You can't do that, Bill," I say.

He pounds his desk with his fist. "The hell I can't."

"On what grounds?" I ask.

MacDonald starts to mumble.

"Do you know what you're doing, Bill?" I ask. "In this country we have freedom of religion. Besides, Clay hasn't publicly announced that he's become a Muslim."

"Bullshit! And don't go hitting me with the Constitution," he says. "Besides, all the newspapermen know that X has been in his camp for weeks."

"Do you want to go down in history as a promoter who denied a man the right to fight for the world's title because of his religion?" I ask. Frankly, I'm more concerned about getting the damn fight on, with the closed circuit doing such a big advance business. MacDonald

cools down a bit. "Jesus, what the hell do you want me to do? It's that Malcolm. He's responsible for all the trouble. He's practically running the kid's fight camp. That don't look good."

"Suppose Malcolm got out of town right away?" I ask. "Would that change your mind?"

He thinks for a minute. "Maybe things wouldn't look so bad. But how do you get him out? You know how hard nosed those Muslims are."

"Let me try," I say, and I drive out to the little house in South Miami where Malcolm X is staying. I had already met Malcolm, and while he had been cold and aloof on other occasions, we had had some interesting conversations on the difference between publicity and propaganda. He wouldn't shake my hand. Muslims weren't touching white hands in those days.

Now, as I arrive in South Miami, Malcolm is sitting on the porch with a few somber brothers. I tell him I must talk to him alone. He gives the brothers the eye and they fade. I explain that the fight's off and recount my conversation with MacDonald. His face remains blank—cold as marble.

"As it stands now, Cassius has lost his shot at the title," I tell him. "You can save it."

"How?" he asks.

"You must leave town immediately."

There is a long, long silence. Then Malcolm says, "Okay, I understand. I'll go, but I'll be back the night of the fight."

Malcolm was then starting to make an impact on

many blacks, and not just Muslims. Maybe the appeal of Martin Luther King, Jr., with his preaching of love, coexistence and nonviolence, was leading Malcolm to another road. But the Muslim hierarchy sneered at King. However, Malcolm was no fool. He could see that King's appeal was growing. Whatever the motive, Malcolm stopped calling whitey "white devils" and while most of his convictions remained firm, his blasts and vitriol against whites came in a lower key.

Splinters began showing in the Muslim wall. The hierarchy began to look on Malcolm as a pariah. A few months before Ali's Lewiston fight, Malcolm was shot to death in a Harlem bathroom.

As I'm sitting in Ali's study reflecting on Malcolm, Muhammad is at his desk, his head back, his eyes closed. I wonder what he's thinking. What secrets are in his mind that he doesn't want to talk about?

A few months after Malcolm was murdered, rumors reached Lewiston, Maine—as we prepared for the second Liston fight—that Ali would be killed by a rival Muslim sect to atone for Malcolm's death. Every precaution was taken, but Ali seemed undisturbed by the alleged threat. In fact, he was angry with me for one day. He thought I planted the story to hype the gate.

Ali's secretary walks into the study and hands him a small case. It holds his magic tricks and gadgets. "You're running late," she tells him. "Better get started." Minutes later, we're in his Rolls-Royce Corniche, weaving through the Sunday city traffic.

Every time we stop for a red light, the windows on the car always go down and there are cries of, "It's him, it's him!" and "Take care of yourself, Ali . . . we love you."

We're on our way to the California Rehabilitation Center, a medium-security prison in Norco, some 60 miles southwest of Los Angeles. The freeway is jammed. A stalled car blocks our lane. The traffic in the next lane is moving along, but some guy in a Chrysler stops his car right in the middle of the highway, jumps out and runs over to Ali. There's cursing and honking.

Ali lowers his window and the guy sticks his hand in. "I won 900 on you off the 'Thrilla' in Manila. God bless you, Ali." They shake and he runs back to his car.

When we exit for gas, four cars follow us into the station and in a minute there's a crowd surrounding us, asking for autographs. Parked next to us in an MG are a young guy and a girl. They seem to be wiggling their fingers at Ali.

"What the hell are they doing?" he asks me. I look. "That's sign language. I think they're deaf and dumb," I tell him.

"Gotta' take care of them," he says. He gets out of the car, walks around and gives them autographs. They thank him and bless him with their fingers.

We hit the road again and the traffic has opened up. "We're running late," he says. The Rolls is purring along at 80. "Got a knife?" he asks. "There's some crap on the inside of the windshield." I don't have a knife. I hand him my car keys and he starts scraping away, one hand on the wheel, still doing 80.

A big delegation greets us at the prison gate and we're taken to the personnel building for lunch. The place was a famous hotel and resort in the Roaring Twenties and the dining room was once a ballroom. It has big, stenciled wooden beams and a grand piano in one corner. You think of flappers and bootleg gin.

I want to wash, and a guard escorts me to the wash room. In the hall on our way back we hear some jazz riffs on the piano. When we get to the dining room I see that Ali is playing. He jumps up. "Gotta' get movin'," he says. "Got 'nother prison to go to."

One of the guards says there'll be a short delay. "We count the prisoners five times a day. They have to be at their bunks or in 'em. We have 550 women here and we've counted 550, alright. Then we found one woman wandering around the grounds. We have to do another count and check to see whether she stuck a dummy in her bunk." Ali looks at him wide-eyed. He loves intrigue.

Fifteen minutes later we are down by the chapels of all denominations. It is time for the noon-day Muslim prayer. Thirty Muslim prisoners kneel on their prayer rugs as an anemic sun pokes through the clouds. Ali kneels at the head with Karim Akbar, the Muslim minister. One of the prisoners sounds the call to prayer, a wail in Arabic. Close your eyes and you conjure minarets and spiked domes.

I stand in the shade as some other prisoners watch. A wizened little guy sidles up to me. "Love that leather cap you're wearing," he says. "Wanna' sell it to me? Worth 20 bucks, ain't it? I'm getting out next week and I'll send you the money." A big-muscled guy standing nearby hears the pitch.

"Hey, muthafucker Stop hustling that man! He a friend o' Ali's." The little guy slinks off and the big guy says, "That muthafucker ain't getting out for 20 years."

After the prayers, hundreds of prisoners surround Ali. He opens his box of tricks and does some legerdemain, changing handkerchief colors, making coins disappear. Then he signs some autographs and we're off to the gym. A light heavyweight is in the ring waiting for him. The place is packed.

Ali takes off his jacket, loosens his tie and they place the gloves on him. The light heavyweight is really looking to whack him at the opening bell. Ali moves around on his toes, sparring and picking off the punches. He tries a long, overhand right. It looks pitiful. He must have known it. He doesn't try it any more. He does the Ali shuffle a half-dozen times, and every time he does the crowd roars. They go two rounds, and at the end, the young light heavyweight is puffing more than Ali.

Next we head for the California Institute for Women in Frontera, some eight miles away. Karim Akbar, the Muslim minister, is with us. He is also the Muslim minister for the women's prison. There are 2,700 inmates there. The minister says to me, "We have a terrible problem in this place. Homosexuality is rampant here, rampant. We just don't know what to do about it."

"The intelligent, human thing to do is to set up some kind of conjugal program," I answer. "It's been tried successfully, you know. When you have 2,700 women locked up for year after year, there has to be a lot of horny females. What the hell do you expect them to do?"

The Minister eyeballs me. "Look to God," he says. Ali, at the wheel, nods vigorously in assent. This isn't the Ali I used to know.

It's a lot harder getting into the women's prison than getting out. You have to pass through one of those sensors you see at airports. It buzzes the first time we try to walk through. The second time, we take out all our keys and change. The third time, we have to take off our shoes. It still buzzes. Finally, some executive chews out the chickenshit guard who is putting us through this ridiculous exercise and we're passed through.

Now we're led to the recreation hall, which is bordered by a large green field. A rope about 100 yards long is strung up, and on the field side there are at least 500 women. Cecil B. DeMille would drool over this mob scene. There are murderers, dope-pushers, bull-dykes, women dressed in their Sunday finest for visiting day, and a lot of poor souls swept away by the whims of fate.

It's strangely quiet until Ali steps forward and says over the microphone, "Luv'ya all, girls." Then things break loose.

"Look at him, he's beautiful, he's beautiful."

"Love to get you in my bunk tonight, baby, you'd walk outta here on your hands and knees."

"What a hunk."

Ali goes to the head of the line and, moving down slowly, signs autographs and does a couple of quick sleight-of-hand tricks. About every 10 steps he leans over and grabs a girl, hugs and kisses her. If this is an ugly girl contest, the first one he kisses wins hands down. She falls to her knees and yells, "Sheet, he kissed me, he kissed me!" The next one he kisses would have come in second in the contest, and that's the way it goes.



Ring Magazine

Later, when I ask him why he only kisses the ugly ones, he says, "Don't you know? The good-lookin' ones got no problem, but them ugs, who is gonna kiss them? When I kiss them, they got somethin' to talk about the rest of their life."

As Ali moves down the line I see a girl standing near me. She has a Madonna (not the singer) face and sad eyes. She's sobbing. I ask her why she's crying. She says, "When I was 15, that's 15 years ago, I was in love with Ali. In high school I wrote a composition about him. I finally get to see him and I'm in a God-damn prison."

"What are you in for?" I ask.

"Manslaughter," she says. "My old man used to beat the shit out of me. The last time he started up, I decided it was him or me and I shot the son-of-a-bitch dead. Got two-and-a-half to five. I've done two years; got four months to go."

The next morning Ali's back at the desk, writing away.



Ken Regan/Corbis

As we're sitting around the living room, catching up on where everyone from the old Ali entourage is these days, I ask him, "What events stand out in your mind as memorable in your career?"

He thinks for a minute. "When I win the title from Liston—the second Liston fight. When I win the title for the second time from Foreman in Zaire, and when I win the title back for the third time from Spinks." I'm surprised he doesn't mention the Frazier fights. I thought the "Thrilla" in Manila was one of the greatest heavyweight fights of all time, but in my mind, the fight against George Foreman in Zaire was the culmination of Ali's wild career.

It was always his dream to fight in Africa, but not even Ali, in all his craziness, could anticipate the frenzy of Zaire. The fight was not only one of the greatest heavyweight bouts of all time, but was an event of Dantesque surrealism at its most bizarre. Weird events flew all around Ali. While a press junket was in mid-flight to the fight in Africa, via Iceland, Foreman suffered a cut eye and the fight was postponed, leaving the newshounds stranded; half jumped ship in Luxembourg and headed back home, despite the promises of oddball Zaire President Mobutu that everyone would be comfortable during the delay.

In Zaire, Ali's training quarter was in the Romanesque Absurd Mobutu complex, sitting on the Zaire River with crocodiles floating by and rumors flying that they'd been recently fed with Mobutu's political enemies. The rumor gained currency with the nervous newsmen after one writer mentioned "congo drums" in his article and it was changed rather sternly to "Zaire drums." Norman Mailer, walking back one night from Ali's compound, suddenly heard the sound of a roaring lion in the bush and expected immortality, only to discover that the wild beast was caged in Mobutu's private zoo. Kings of varying kinds paraded in full costume. Don King, the promoter, in a flowing gown; Mobutu, the oppressive dictator, in native garb, while behind his back the real natives whispered, "He was a sergeant 12 years ago, now he's the seventh richest man in the world." And then there was The Fight. Only Ali could top everything that had already happened.

I ask him if he thinks about dying.

"The older I get, the more I think about it," he says softly.

He gives me a hug as I'm leaving. Walking down to my car, I'm thinking, "May God or Allah preserve this guy for as long as he wants to be around."

SPIN

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SPIN-3

SPIN PATROL

In case you somehow missed these major news stories, we didn't . . .

She's done it a second time

84-YEAR-OLD WIFE PREGNANT AGAIN!

'This time we anticipate major complications,' says doctor

**Man who drives
U.S. grannies
wild with desire**

Dwarf toss is canceled

A nightclub in Chippenham, England, canceled a dwarf-throwing contest after receiving complaints from around the country. A recent dwarf-throwing contest in an Australian bar had attracted worldwide publicity — and spurred widespread protests. The owner of the club said he is considering rescheduling the event — but this time he'll use garden gnome statues instead of real live dwarfs.

**Potted plant
tried to murder
housewife**

• This plant
was the
messenger
of doom •

A HOUSEWIFE says that a potted palm given to her by her husband as a gift tried to kill her.

Rabid nun infects convent

A RABID NUN infected the entire convent where she lived after she was bitten by a bat as she was ringing the bells for evening vespers.

Teen sleeps right through a miracle



**He naps on tracks as
train roars over him**

A sleepy teen snoozed away on a railroad track as two 300,000-pound diesel engines thundered over him — and miraculously he escaped without a scratch. "The clearance between the kid and train was such that if he'd have awakened and looked up, he would have lost his head," said a sheriff's office spokesman. William Montgomery, 13, said he stopped to rest and smoke a cigarette on the tracks near a relative's home in Dayton, Ohio. After resting a bit, the drowsy teenager dozed off. "I had no idea a train was going to come," he said. The train's engineer told sheriff's detectives he thought someone had left a pile of garbage or clothes on the tracks. But when the horrified engineer realized the pile was a person, he brought the powerful engines to a stop. "He locked up the brakes," said a sheriff's spokesman, "but the first engine and part of the second had already passed over the kid before the train came to a stop." The engineer expected to see a bloody mass when he looked under the train, but the boy was unharmed and still sound asleep between the rails. "No train, nothing woke me up," said the yawning youngster. "I didn't know what happened until I was out and everybody was hollering at me. "I feel very lucky. All my friends say I'm lucky. It's just a wild thing." William said he doesn't want to make a big scene about the near-fatal nightmare "because he doesn't want to encourage other teenagers to try sleeping on tracks." "They'll think they can get out without a scratch like I did," he said.

— JACK ALEXANDER

**Oh my God,
they've dug
up mother!**

SPIN wants you on patrol: capture those gems the Pulitzers ignore, send them in, get published, get a SPIN PATROL T-shirt. Get it!

Desperately Seeking Something...

Article by Henry Rollins

Some of you probably saw me at the Madonna Look-Alike Contest recently held in Los Angeles. Yes, I was there; I try not to let a good opportunity pass me by. Sure, I looked a bit silly with my lace shirt and black bra, but I really thought I had a chance at placing. I even shaved my legs! (Actually, I had shaved them for the Michael Jackson Look-Alike Contest the previous day.) I was thrown out. The judges did not like my dancing. They said, "Too suggestive." I guess they were right. Doing two half steps and then lunging forward on top of a fellow contestant and trying to chew off her bra might be considered a bit "suggestive." David Lee Roth would have been proud.

I saw the Madonna movie. I put my money up and checked out *Desperately Seeking Susan*. Good news: not bad! Really—good lines, and good shots of the East Village of New York City. Madonna plays this pretty, shifty panhandler with something extra in the *you know what I mean* department. She plays the role very well. For you who have not yet forked out your hard-earned

while-u-bop department. One man, guitar slung 'cross his chest, singin' and dancin' in the dark, searchin', runnin', desperately seekin' . . . that's right—Bruce. One day, when I was 14 years old, Bruce came to me. He knocked on the window of my limo. I lowered the window and stared at the weedy fellow. He said, "Mr. Rollins, my name is Bruce Springsteen. I'm a man with a guitar. I'm searchin', I'm runnin', but sometimes I think I'm just dancin' in the dark." I looked into his eyes. He had the look of a man possessed, a man *Born to Run*, a man desperately seeking. . . . I said, "Bruce, stop panting on my door, you're ruining the finish. Now listen here, go to Asbury Park, New Jersey, hang out on E Street, find some musicians, write some really bitchin' anthems, and get on the road. You're gonna be big, you're gonna be *The Boss*. Now get out of here, you're making me look bad."

I was always hoping in the late '70s that "Bossmania" would die! die! die! I remember those days with dread. Girls would have "Bruce parties," where they would

*"Hey baby,
I was born in the U.S.A.,
how about you?"*

sit around, cry and play Bruce Springsteen records. What a drag for the guys. Now *The Boss* is back and he's bigger than ever. I can't imagine Americanism as a hip trend. I mean, do you use it as a pick-up line? "Hey baby, I was born in the USA, how about you?" The Boss is a down—no booze, no drugs, no spandex, no pyrotechnics onstage. Your parents would love him.

I can see the troops now, bounding over the hills, singing "Born in the USA" and catching the bullets. Many young males will copy Bruce's "look": white T-shirt, blue jeans with red hankie, and boots. The Boss looks like a stock gay boy, and that is good. These Kids will go downtown and get it good, the hard way, the American way, and I think that is a good thing. Rock music breeds killers, and that is OK. It's OK until Bruce Youth chase you with a crowbar, screaming the lyrics to "Cover Me." That's when I get a little inflamed. Whatever happened to Jackson Browne, Levi cords, and stupid, oversized belt buckles?

We are the world. We are? Quincy Jones says so. Fine. I'll never forget that night. I had just gotten home from the Grammys. I was taking off my tux, remembering never to go to one of those things again—couldn't take all the groupies, the flashbulbs, Tina Turner throwing herself at me . . . never again. The phone rang; it was Lionel Richie. "Lionel baby, good showing tonight, great shoes. What's up?"

"Henry baby," (that's the way we address each other in the industry) "Henry baby, we're all down at the studio cutting this out-of-sight track for some starving people or something like that. It's really happening, like, out of sight. But, like, something's missing man, like Bruce and Michael are uptight because you're not making the session. Can you dig where I'm coming from?"

I said, "Lionel baby, be cool, 'cause you guys can lay down some happening product tonight—you got the talent, you can sweeten it up in the mix. Call me next week, we'll have lunch."

The truth was, I had no wheels. I gave the driver the night off after I got home. I lost my driver's license in

'80 when I drove my turbo Ferrari out of a hotel window. Well, that's the story of how I almost sang on the "We Are the World" single.

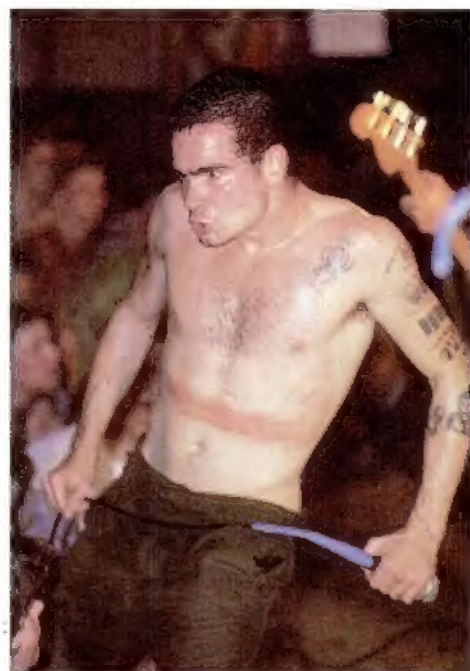
Frankie came to Hollywood. Frankie said, "War!" Frankie said, "Buy!" Nine out of 10 people said, "OK!" The newspapers said, "Ripoff!" Henry say sleep. I walk the streets, desperately seeking. . . . Will this torture never end?! I feel like a little fish in a sea so big that I may drown. We're talking total craze-out, we're talking tofutti addicts, we're talkin' CyndiBossPrince-MadonnaMania! Oh, rock me, shock me, throw me down a flight of stairs, deport me to New Jersey, but let me have my MTV!

Sister Cyndi is so unusual. I like that. She allows other people to be "unusual." If I walked around with a tutu and red hair, I'd probably get arrested for prostitution. But I have bad luck in everything.

Read the lyrics of "She-bop." When Cyndi Lauper says that "Girls just want to have fun," she's not kidding! Cyndi-baby is OK. A bit too dumpy to be a sex



Peter Morin



Edward Reason

on this, I'll tell ya, she don't do nothin' "like a virgin," if ya catch my drift.

Virgins are Duran Duran's department. Imagine the hell those lads are put through, playing all over the world, getting bombarded with candy-bar wrappers and training bras every night. What about 10 years down the line?—Hotel keys, support hose and palimony suits, ouch!

Today's rock mega-star is more than a musician. Today's icon is a multimedia movie star. When they're not playing live, they're doing videos, grabbing trophies, wrestling and raising money for starving out-of-towners. Do they ever sleep? Only their advisors and technical directors know for sure.

Everybody needs some security, something to bank on, something to call their own. In this day of video-mania, one rocker shines brilliantly in the sincerity-

object in major markets, but I'm sure she's responsible for some sleepless nights in places like Philadelphia and other disaster areas. Cyndi-baby has a message. She's saying, "It's OK to look and carry on like a brain-damaged lunatic, dress like a fruit salad, fly in trash cans and wrestle, and if I can do it, so can you!" Cyndi, you're OK, call me and we'll have lunch.

Yes, you noticed how I didn't talk about Prince. Why should I? He's no fun. He's too distant. Besides, he's pissed at me because I wouldn't do backing vocals on his new record. Prince, you're a joke—have your bodyguard call me, he and I will have lunch.

I'm desperately seeking the perfect video concept. Here is the best one so far: Madonna lip-synching to "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," while Prince and The Boss (who are wearing Reagan and Chernenko masks) breakdance at her feet. Henry say: over and out. ☺

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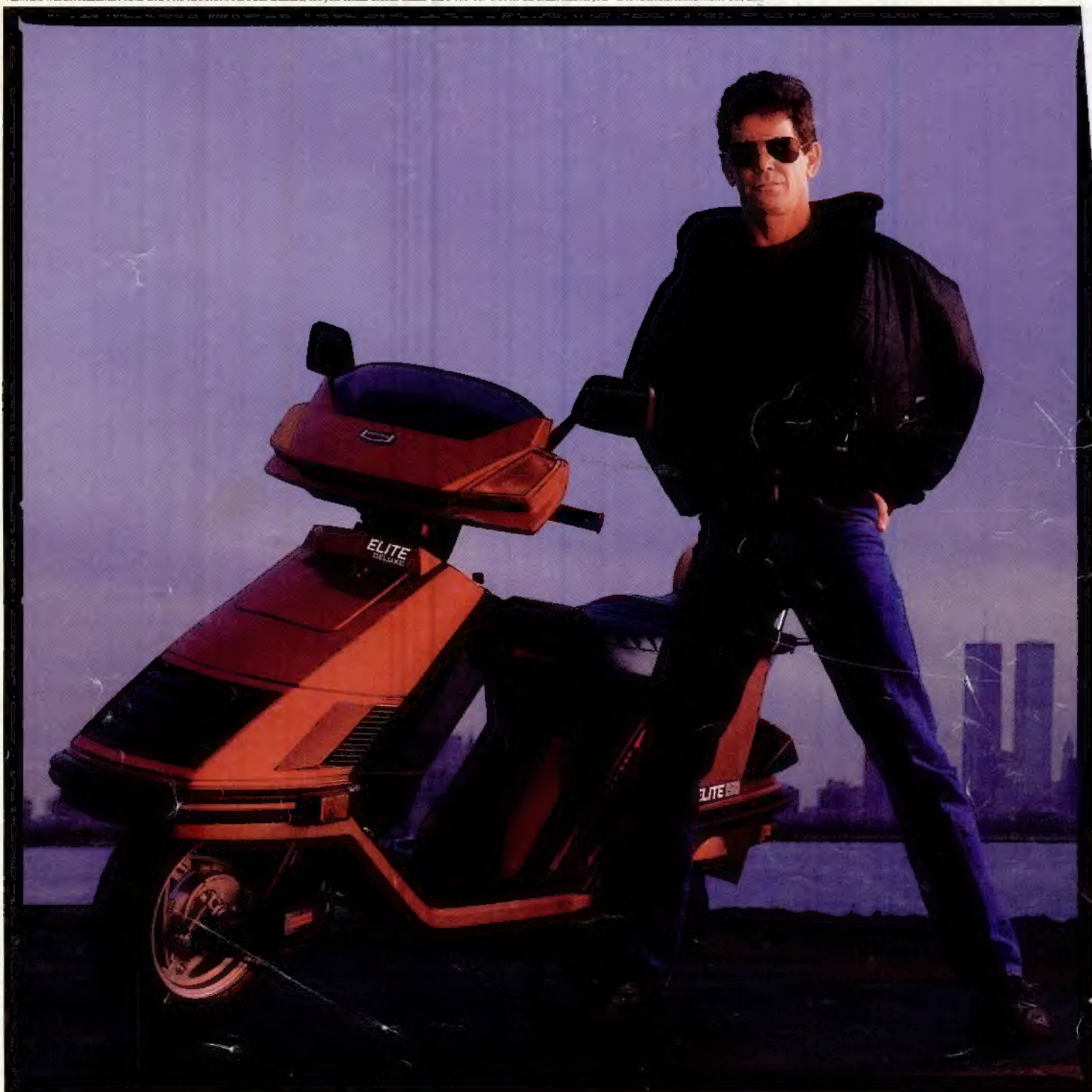
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Don't settle for walking.

HONDA 

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